

Jesus' High Priestly Prayer Part 1: Jesus Prays for Himself

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The High Priestly Prayer

By David Chanski

Bible Text: John 17:1-5
Preached on: Sunday, May 10, 2009

Trinity Baptist Church
160 Changebridge Road
Montville, NJ 07045

Website: www.trinitymontville.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tbcnj

The following sermon was delivered on Sunday morning, May 10, 2009, at Trinity Baptist Church in Montville, NJ.

Please take your Bibles this morning and turn to the gospel according to John in chapter 17. I'm going to read the first five verses of John 17.

1 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, 2 as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. 3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. 4 I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. 5 And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."

Amen.

Well, let's once again look to God and ask for his help as we come to his word this morning. Let's pray.

Father in heaven, we do thank You for Your word and ask now that You would open our eyes that we might behold wondrous things out of it. Thank You for Jesus Christ, Your Son. Thank You for His ministry of interceding for us. Help us to learn this morning, cleanse us of our sins, and we ask all these things in the name of Your Son Jesus. Amen.

Well, we have made our way in past months through the farewell discourse of the Lord Jesus Christ that's found in John 14 through 16, and today we come after an interval of a few months now, to John 17. Jesus finished what's called the farewell discourse at the end of John 16. John 17 has been called by many people Jesus' high priestly prayer. In fact, as I just look down, that's the title in the top margin of the Bible that I'm reading from:

Jesus' high priestly prayer. And it's called his high priestly prayer not just because Jesus was a high priest and because he was going to lay down his life, which is part of the work of a high priest, he makes sacrifices on behalf of men before God. He was sacrificing his own life, he was a high priest in that sense, but it's called his high priestly prayer because the other part of the work of a priest was that he would make intercession for the people, as it says in the book of Hebrews. Jesus here, even though it was his darkest hour, if you will, in which he was going to face all the powers of darkness aligned against him, the hour in which he was going to face the unmitigated wrath of the Father poured out on him, still, just as we saw in the farewell discourse, he is concerned to serve and help his disciples. This prayer is a prayer for his disciples, not a prayer for himself, and so that's another reason why it has been called Jesus' high priestly prayer.

That's what we'll consider over the next several lessons and I'll preach through John 17, but I want to begin with some introductory words to this chapter and the first one is this, I just want to point out as I've already intimated, that there is a close connection between this prayer and the farewell discourse. We end chapter 16 with Jesus' words, "I have overcome the world," and then in chapter 17, we begin with these words from verse 1, "Jesus spoke these words," referring to the words of the farewell discourse, "lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said." In other words, this prayer comes right on the heels of his words in chapters 14 through 16. So there's a close connection, this chapter, this prayer follows those words of encouragement, those words of encouragement in those chapters flow into this prayer, if you will. And you'll see as we go throughout this chapter 17, that there are a number of themes that appear in John 14 through 16 that appear again in chapter 17. So there's a close connection.

The second thing I wanted to note is the address that Jesus uses to speak to the Father, the way that he addresses his heavenly Father. He addresses him in his prayer in a way similar to the way that he encourages us to address God in heaven, and that is, he uses the word "Father." There might be different reasons why he uses the word "Father" compared to the way that we use the word "Father." He is the Son of God in one sense, we are sons of God in a different sense, and yet he uses that same word of address. And as he has spoken about his Father in heaven, this is the same word that he has over and over used to refer to God the Father, and it reminds us that he is the eternal Son of God. As I said, we have a similar relationship but we do not stand in the same relationship to God as Jesus Christ our Lord does, but he addresses him in the same way we do, he calls him "Father."

Then thirdly, I want to just say something about the time when Jesus uttered the words of his prayer. The time, of course, we don't know the exact time on the clock or on the dial or the position of the sun on the horizon, but we do know that it was Jesus' hour. His hour has now come. We see that in the first part of his prayer. It says, "Father, the hour has come." Back in chapter 12, I'll just turn there briefly to remind us what the significance of his hour having come is, John 12:23. Here we have the words of the Lord Jesus, he says, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified." And in verse 31 of chapter 13 we see these words of the Lord Jesus as he now approaches the time of his death, it says there, "So, when he had gone out," that's Judas, "Jesus said, 'Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him.'" We've seen as we've worked our way through

those chapters in John, that his being glorified begins with his death. He is glorified in his death, at least that's the beginning of Christ being glorified. That is the hour that has come. Judas departed, Jesus says, "The hour has come." Judas went out to get the Romans and the Jews to come and arrest Jesus, he was betraying him, Jesus was going now ultimately to the cross, that means his hour has come.

So in his great hour of need and on the threshold of his great triumph, we find the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer, in prayer to the Father, the Father that he greatly loved, the Father with whom he constantly communed. So when we consider his life and his habits and we think about the fact that Jesus is now going to go through this great trial, he's coming to the climax of all the work that he came to perform on behalf of his people, we see Jesus in a very common posture for himself, we see him in prayer, and we say what else would we expect Jesus Christ to be doing at this time. Brethren, may we as Christ's people so live that when we come to times of crisis and trial and difficulty in our lives, the same would be said of us by people who know us, that of course he would be found, of course she would be found in prayer to her God. May God so help us.

Well, those are the introductory matters I wanted to mention. Now let's begin, then, as we look at John 17 and Jesus' prayer, let's begin with Jesus' petition or his request, and that's in the last part of verse 1. After he mentions that his hour has come, "Father, the hour has come." He now gives his petition, "Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You." His petition, his request of God at this hour is that God would be glorified and that Christ would be glorified in him, or that Christ rather would glorify him, the Father. He's praying, in a sense, that the veil that was over him, that was over his glory due to his Incarnation and due to his humiliation, he's praying that God would begin to remove that veil and that he would be seen for who he is; that God would glorify the Son that the Son might glorify the Father; that he would receive glory and honor and praise. He came into this world, as Isaiah said, as one that we did not esteem. We looked upon him, we thought he was like other men. In some ways, he was less attractive and less appealing than other men. He was the Son of God but there was a veil over his glory. Now Jesus, who throughout the course of his earthly life, his 30+ years, has had that veil in front of him, in a sense, is praying, "Father, take it away."

Now there might be a couple of questions that would come up, problems, if you will, in the fact that Jesus is praying that he would be glorified by the Father. The first question that could come up would be something along these lines. Throughout Jesus' ministry, he constantly emphasized that he was not seeking to draw attention to himself. He said, "My doctrine is not Mine, they're My Father's. My words are not Mine, I only hear what I speak with the Father." He said that, "The works that I do are not Mine but they're the Father's works." He said, "I don't come to glorify Myself, I come to glorify the Father." So the question could be asked: was Jesus now beginning to exhibit a self-centeredness that was not characteristic of his previous ministry and of his previous statements? We go back, for instance, to chapter 8, if you just look briefly at John 8:50, there Jesus said explicitly, "I do not seek My own glory; there is One who seeks and judges." And then back a chapter to chapter 7 in verse 18 he says, "He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who seeks the glory of the One who sent Him is true, and no

unrighteousness is in Him." And Jesus' point was this, "I'm not speaking from Myself, I am not seeking My own glory, I'm seeking the glory of the One who sent Me."

Other statements in this very gospel account, Jesus' own statements lead us to raise this question: was he now acting in an uncharacteristically self-centered way that he did not before? Well, in answer to that we say this, we say, first of all and foremost, that the Father's glory is bound up with the Son's and Jesus knew that. He was aware of it. The Father's glory is bound up with his. You notice the rest of Jesus' petition, he began by saying, "Father, glorify Your Son," but then he concludes, "that Your Son also may glorify You." If the Son is glorified, he knows that the Father is going to be glorified. In a sense that's even true of us, isn't it? Romans 8:30, those he justified, these he also, what? Glorified. Is your being glorified and my being glorified an end in itself? Not at all. If you're a Christian and you think of that question, you would shudder to think that it would be an end in itself that you would be glorified. The only reason you're content with the Bible's statement that you, who are predestined and called and justified, will also be glorified is because you know that in your being glorified God himself ultimately will be the one being glorified.

So the Father's glory is bound up with the Son's. Second answer to that question is this: Jesus' hour has now come. Jesus was very aware that his hour had come. Up until that time, Jesus kept a very low profile throughout his ministry, didn't he? He didn't try to draw attention to himself, sometimes even rebuked people that he healed and went and told about what Jesus had done. He admonished them after he healed them, "Don't tell anyone who did this." He was going out of his way not to draw attention to himself, not to manifest his glory. He hid himself, in a sense, but now his hour has come and back in chapter 12, we read there that now is the time that the Son of Man will be lifted up. What did it mean? Do you remember it when we saw that? It meant two things, it was a statement with a double meaning. It meant, first, he was going to be lifted up on the cross, it meant, second, a literal understanding of that word, he would be exalted. He would be magnified. People would see him for who he is, the Son of God Incarnate, and he would, then, draw all men to himself.

The darkness came, the earthquake came, the Father was answering his prayer, was he not? The hour had come. Jesus prays, "Now Father," in verse 5, "glorify Me together with Yourself." He is God of God, in other words, as much as he is the obedient servant of God. He is the obedient servant of God but he is still God of God at the same time, and so Jesus is saying, "Father, glorify Me," because his hour has come and because the Father's glory is bound up with his glory. Is he being self-centered? Absolutely not.

But then the second question is this, second problem that could come up and we've already considered the answer to this so I'll just give you a brief reminder of it because it's been so long. How could he be glorified in his death? His death is the darkest part of his humiliation. Well, the answer is to begin with, a review of what we've already seen and I've already mentioned it. Let's just look at it once again in chapter 12. Death for Jesus was the beginning of his exaltation. When we think of it in theological terms, we think of Christ's ministry or Christ's, yes, his ministry, we think of it as including his

humiliation through this anyway. From here, the time of his birth to the time of his death and his burial, that's his humiliation. Then we think of his exaltation as beginning with his resurrection and then continuing forever as he reigns in heaven now and then when he comes in glory in the new heavens and new earth forever. His humiliation, his exaltation. Theologically a nice, neat, little package from his birth to his burial, then from his resurrection and on is his exaltation. But Jesus' thinking as he speaks here in John's gospel is that his exaltation, his glorification begins in his death. John 12:23 and 24, "But Jesus answered them, saying, 'The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.'" His death is the beginning of his exaltation in Jesus' thinking and therefore in our thinking it should be as well.

That's how he's glorified in his death and furthermore not his only death the beginning of Jesus' exaltation, death for Jesus is the ground of his exaltation as well. Look at verses 32 and 33 of John 12. He says, "'And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.' This He said, signifying by what death He would die." If I am lifted up from the earth, if I die on the cross, then I will draw all peoples to myself. His death is the beginning of his exaltation. His death is the ground of his exaltation.

We know that, don't we? We understand it. We may not be inclined to think that way theologically but we do know that. What do we gather to do once a month here at a Lord's Day evening? We gather to proclaim and to commemorate the death of Jesus Christ in the Lord's Supper. Do we blush about the fact that we have a Savior who died? Are we ashamed of that fact? Do we try to hide it? No. We glory in that fact. As Paul said, "I glory only in the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ."

We sing in one of our hymns, "Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned He stood. Sealed my pardon with His blood," that is, with his death, and then we don't hang our heads, we say, "Hallelujah, what a Savior! Lifted up was He to die, it is finished was His cry. Now in heaven exalted high, Hallelujah, what a Savior!" Jesus' death is the beginning of and it is the ground of his exaltation.

So there's Jesus' petition or his request that he be glorified and that the Father be glorified in him but then, secondly, let's notice Jesus' argument or Jesus' reason that he gives God the Father why he should glorify him and that's in verses 2 through 5 of John 17. He says in verse 1, "Glorify Your Son," verse 2 he says, "as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."

We want to look at the argumentation Jesus uses with the Father. You think about arguments being used in prayer, using arguments with God, reasoning with God, that's how we should pray. We should learn from Jesus' prayer. That's what he does here, he doesn't just state his petition, he gives reasons why the Father should answer his request.

Sometimes you will pray, "Lord," and then you give your request, and then you say, "for this is what You have said, O Lord." You might say something like, "Lord, answer my request for You promised that You would do thus and such." Or, "Lord, help me to do this for You commanded me to do this." Or you say, "Lord, I want You to do this because I think this would bring glory to You and, Lord, I want to glorify Your name." When we speak like that, we're using an argument with God. Well, that's what Jesus is doing here.

So let's look at his argument, look at his reason for praying as he prays. He gives us two arguments and so let's notice them. The first one is this, the first argument he uses with God why he should answer his prayer is this, that his prayer is consistent with the Father's plan. His prayer is consistent with the Father's plan. That's what we see in the first part. He says, "as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." That's the Father's plan. Back in chapter 5 he said that the Father has given the authority to the Son to give life to whom he will. Jesus is now reminding him of that reality. He knows it is his good pleasure to give life to his people, to save them from their sins. Jesus is saying, "Father, that's the way You planned it. This is what I'm going to the cross to do. I'm going to be lifted up that I might draw all those people to Myself that they may have eternal life." That's his argument, "My prayer is perfectly consistent with Your plan." He knows that it's the Father's will that he die on the cross and through that death give life to his people.

Turn with me back to the book of Daniel 9. We'll see a place in the Bible where Daniel prays and uses a similar kind of argument with God. Daniel 9, the first three verses. He knows what God's plan is and so he prays according to God's plan. "In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans--in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years specified by the word of the LORD [given] through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem." He saw that there were going to be 70 years that the people of God were kept from Jerusalem, that they would be living in exile, and so as he saw the clock ticking and the time approaching, he didn't say, "Oh, well, this is what God plans to do, therefore I don't need to worry about it." Some of you will remember, I think about three months ago Pastor Johnston was here from Mebin. He prayed, he gave us some instruction right along these lines, didn't he? He said, "Pray the promises of God." Pray what you know God is going to do? He said in his word that's exactly what he's going... Yes, that's exactly what we should do. So here's what he says, what Daniel says, "Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes." In other words, he sees from the word of God as he looks to God, "Father, Your plan is not to utterly forsake Your people." Then he sets himself to praying that God will not utterly forsake his people; that God will restore his people just as he has said in his word through his prophets.

So Jesus prays there in verse 2, "as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life." Jesus is praying, "Father, just as You have given me." He knows it's the Father's plan to grant eternal life through his death. Now he says, "Father, do it.

Glorify Me, exalt Me that they might come to saving knowledge of Me." The Father's plan is to glorify himself, his plan is to do that in the salvation of men, and to do that through the work, through the mediation of Jesus Christ the Son. That's what Jesus knew, now Jesus prays, "Father, I know this is Your plan. Carry it out. Fulfill it in My life and in My work."

Just look back briefly at John 6 for a moment. John 6:37-39. Here we have Jesus' words earlier on as he's speaking about himself as the true bread that came down from heaven. He says, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. All that the Father gives Me will come to Me." I started at verse 35. I wanted to start at verse 37 so I'm going to keep reading through verse 39. All that the Father gives Me will come to me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day." This is the Father's plan and that is Jesus' prayer, that the Father would be glorified in the salvation of men through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

That's his first argument, if you will, that his prayer is consistent with his Father's plan. His second argument is this. Remember what his petition is, he says, "Father, glorify Your Son." His second argument is because he has glorified the Father. He says, "You glorify Me, Father, because I have glorified You." Verse 4 and 5, he says, "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." We saw there was some similarity between Jesus' first argument and the prayer of Daniel. Daniel saw what God's plan was, he knew it was God's plan, he set himself to praying, "Father, fulfill Your plan." Likewise with Jesus, he reminded the Father this was his plan that he would give life through him, through his death. Here what Jesus does is this, he argues, "Father, I've done what You asked Me to do. I've glorified You on the earth, now You glorify Me."

This argument has some similarity to a famous prayer of another Old Testament saint and that is Nehemiah. Go with me for a moment back to Nehemiah 13:19-22. Last chapter of the book of Nehemiah. Let's read verses 19 through 22. Nehemiah prayed something similar to what Jesus prays. He doesn't say, "Father, I've glorified You," but he does say, "Lord, here's what I've done, now answer my prayer." Beginning in verse 19, "So it was, at the gates of Jerusalem, as it began to be dark before the Sabbath," these are Nehemiah's own words, "that I commanded the gates to be shut, and charged that they must not be opened till after the Sabbath. Then I posted some of my servants at the gates, so that no burdens would be brought in on the Sabbath day. Now the merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares lodged outside Jerusalem once or twice. Then I warned them, and said to them, 'Why do you spend the night around the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you!' From that time on they came no more on the Sabbath. And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should go and guard the gates, to sanctify the Sabbath day." And now he makes this brief prayer, "Remember me, O my

God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of Your mercy!" Do you see what he's doing? He's saying, "Lord, I've done this to bring about some reformation on the Sabbath. Remember me and bless me." Do you see what he's saying?

And likewise in verses 30 and 31 speaking about another kind of reformation and cleansing of the people of God here, he says, "Thus I cleansed them of everything pagan. I also assigned duties to the priests and the Levites, each to his service, and to bringing the wood offering and the firstfruits at appointed times." Some things were neglected, some things were undone, through his efforts reformation was brought about, repentance was brought about, good things happened for the people of God. Nehemiah closes his book, "Remember me, O my God, for good!" Do you see what he's saying? He's saying, "Lord, I've done what You've called me here to Jerusalem to do. I've done what You wanted me to do. I've done what You asked me to do, what You told me to do. I've done what You've commanded me to do. Now, O Lord, bless me accordingly." There's an analogy there between this prayer and Jesus' prayer, at least in essence. He says, "Lord, look what I've done by Your grace, yes, but look what I've done. Now bless me."

It's not a complete analogy when we compare Nehemiah's prayer to Jesus or any of your prayers and my prayers to Jesus' prayer. There's not a complete analogy. With Jesus Christ, what he did and what he was going to do on the eve of his death, what he was going to do is completely meritorious. What he did earns the blessing of God. He earned the blessing of God. He merited it. He purchased it with what he did. We do not. What we do is not meritorious, likewise with Nehemiah. Our obedience, our good works, are not meritorious at all but whatever we receive is absolutely free, it is entirely by grace even when, as in the case of Nehemiah, it's a blessing for obedience to God. All right, do you understand that?

There's not a perfect analogy but there's an analogy nevertheless and that's what Jesus is praying here. He's praying, "Father, I've done what You've told Me to do. I've done what You've called Me to do. Now bless Me." With Nehemiah, it was as it says there in verse 22, "according to the greatness of Your mercy." We always have to have the posture, brethren, even if we're going to learn from Jesus' prayer and pray, "Father, I have done what You asked. Now do this, I ask." We have to have the posture that Nehemiah had that it's all of mercy and we have to have the posture of that servant that Jesus mentioned in Luke 17. He said, "When you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have only done what was our duty to do.'" We should not let ourselves get puffed up. We should not let ourselves think that God owes us anything, brethren, but we may pray as Jesus prayed and as Nehemiah prayed. So what Jesus is saying, then, in his prayer is this, "Father, I have done everything You've asked of Me. I have done all that You have required. I've obeyed all of Your commands even to the point of laying down My life. Now, Father, because I've done these things, glorify Me."

So when he says, "I have glorified," and he uses the past tense there, do you see that? He says, "Father," verse 4, "I have glorified You on the earth." I believe he's including his dying in his prayer. He hasn't died yet, has he? But as I said, Jesus is speaking, he already

was speaking this way in the farewell discourse as if he already had laid down his life. Remember in verse 33 of chapter 16, he said, "In the world you will have tribulation but be of good cheer." Why? "I have overcome the world." He was ready to overcome the world in his death. He was ready to put principalities and powers to flight and even to death in his death on the cross. He was ready to do it but he spoke as if it's already a done deal and likewise he's doing the same thing here. "I have finished," he says in verse 4, "the work which You have given Me to do." And he echoes those words, the words of the prayer in chapter 19 in verse 30 when hanging on the cross and breathing his last. He says, "It is finished." So when Jesus says here, "I have finished the work," he's including his death in it.

So when he says, "I have glorified it," he's including his death and all of his obedience. When he says, "glorify Me," then what is he asking the Father? What is he asking? He's asking that the Father will exalt him beginning with his death and then concluding with his return to heaven. You see that in verse 5. He says, "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." He's not just saying, "Glorify Me in My death on the cross," he's not just saying, "Glorify Me by bringing many sinners to faith in Me and thus to eternal life," he's saying, "Glorify Me by taking Me back to My heavenly dwelling. Restore Me to My original heavenly glory," he is saying.

That's what he's asking the Father. That's what he's praying. He's saying, in a sense, "That's where I came from, that's where I was at the beginning. In the beginning was the Word." Where was the Word? "The Word was with God." He says, "Father, I've done what You've called Me to do on the earth. Take Me back to My heavenly glory. Glorify Your Son." In a sense, he's saying, "I've served My time on earth. I've done all that I've needed to do in this vale of tears, in this valley of sorrow. I've served My time here in My humiliation," Jesus is saying. It's like Paul's words that we have in Philippians 2:8 and 9, "And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name." That's what Jesus was praying and that's what Paul said happened in answer to Jesus' prayer.

Well, there's a lot for us to learn in these five verses. I'm just singling out a couple of headings, just a couple of headings for us in terms of some lessons for us from John 17:1-5 this morning and the first thing is this: we learn some things, as I've already mentioned, about prayer. We learn some things about prayer. Three things in particular that I have. First, we should pray for what we know to be God's will. You know something to be God's will, you should pray for it. There are things that we know God will do, aren't there? We know they're his will. We know, for instance, he's going to save all of the elect. Now in the flesh, we would think this way: we know God's going to do that, no sense in bothering to pray for it, is there? That's the flesh reasoning. Sometimes we are too characterized by the thinking and the mentality of the flesh.

D. A. Carson says about this text, he says, "As so often in Scripture, emphasis on God's sovereignty functions as an incentive to prayer, not a dis-incentive." Brethren, we should

not let the fact that we know that God is going to do certain things make us say, "Therefore we don't need to pray." Think of that passage we looked at in Daniel, Daniel 9:1-3. He understood from the word of God this is what God is going to do, but Daniel's response was not simply to sit back and say, "What a relief because I thought this whole thing wasn't going to turn out so well for God's people." He didn't just sit back and breathe a sigh of relief, neither did he say, "Oh, people haven't realized this. I'm going to need to go and preach this truth. I'm a prophet so I'm going to go preach." No. What was his response? It says he gave himself earnestly to fasting and praying. He saw what the will of God was and he set himself to prayer.

There are so many things, brethren, that we know that God will do, aren't there? We read about it in his word. We have his promise and as a result, we are tempted, we are tempted not to pray about those things. We're tempted to pray about the things we don't know about especially and primarily, but here Jesus is showing us we should pray earnestly for the things we know that God is going to do, that he will save all of the elect, that he will keep all of his people, that he will forgive our sins. We know he'll forgive our sins if we are his people, don't we? We know that but he tells us to pray, confessing our sins and asking him to forgive us our sins, that he will provide for all of our needs. We know that he will but he tells us in his word he wants to hear from us about those things. He wants to call us to come to him with our open hands and say, "Father in heaven, fill my hand." And brethren, we should like Daniel and like Jesus our Lord pray for these things earnestly when we pray.

When we pray earnestly, when we know that God will do the things we are asking for, we are far more likely to pray earnestly, aren't we, brethren, when we're in the midst of trials than that find us doubting whether God will do what he says. Do you see what I'm saying? If you establish a habit of saying, "I know that God is going to do this thing, I know God is going to save His people, I know God is going to keep me to the end, I know God is going to provide for all my needs, let me skip on to the other things that I'm not so certain about and cry out to God about these things." I'm saying pray about those things, pray about those things that the word tells you to pray about, that God will forgive your sins, that he will give you this day your daily bread, I'm not saying neglect the other things that you're not so certain about, I'm saying pray earnestly about those things as well because then if you establish that habit, when you come to that time of difficulty, when you come to the hour of trial, if you've established that kind of faithful habit of praying earnestly to God about those things, then when you are tempted to doubt that God really is going to deliver every one of his people from every danger and distress and dilemma that they find themselves embroiled in, do you know what you're going to find yourself doing? You are going to be on your face before God at that time.

Pray for the things you know that God is going to do. We should pray for what we know to be God's will. The second thing we learn about prayer is this: we should pray that God will be glorified. Do you see how Jesus starts his prayer? "Glorify Your Son that Your Son also may glorify You." I said one of the reasons we can say that Jesus' prayer was not self-centered in any way is that he was praying ultimately even when he prayed that the Son would be glorified, he was praying ultimately that his heavenly Father would be

glorified. We should pray constantly, brethren, that God will be glorified. Jesus was here praying, "Father, I'm about to undergo a great trial but as I undergo this great trial, I ask that Your name be glorified in it all."

That was his prayer and that should be an example for us, brethren. Think of how the Apostle Paul echoed this sentiment when he wrote these words in Philippians 1. We read them earlier in the service. He said it was his "earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed but with all boldness as always so now also Christ will be magnified in my body whether by life or by death." Now he was praying, remember, that God would deliver him from his bonds and he believed that God would deliver him from his bonds because he believed it was better that he remain for a while for the sake of the benefit of the people of God, but Paul here shows us what ultimately was the goal of his praying, not just that he would be delivered, not just for the good of the souls of God's people in Philippi, but so that God, that Christ would be magnified in his body.

We should always pray that God will be glorified, and similarly the next thing we learn is this: we should pray that God's will will be done. In verses 2 and 3 there, Jesus prays. He says, "This is the Father's will that the Son should have authority over all flesh, that His people, He would give eternal life to people, and this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." He's asking God that he would accomplish his will.

We're told that Jesus prayed in Gethsemane, this is in Matthew 26, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." Let this cup pass from me. There was something in Jesus Christ that did not want to die, that did not want to face the wrath of the Father on the cross. But he says not as I will but as you will. What's he praying? That God's will would be done.

We could say in these last two points that we should pray that God will be glorified and that God's will would be done, we have a good example of prayer following the first and the third petitions of the Lord's Prayer, don't we? They are wonderfully illustrated here, "Hallowed by Thy name. Thy will be done." These are the motives that drove Jesus' prayer. These things were Jesus' prayer, brethren. What a godly man he was. What a godly man as he's facing that trial, as he's facing that depth of desertion by God the Father, the pain, the agony, he prays, "Let Your name be hallowed and let Your will be done."

He quit himself like a man to pray that way, didn't he? He faced danger very courageously. You are never more of a man of God or a woman of God than when you can face life, including your darkest trials in life, with these motives and with these prayers, that God will be glorified and that God's will will be done. Do you want to grow in likeness to Jesus Christ? Do you want to grow in courage? Do you want to grow in faith? Do you want to grow in maturity, grow in godliness, grow in zeal? Look at Jesus Christ praying on the eve of his death and imitate him. Ask God to fulfill in your life the Scripture, "But we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory."

And then finally, in the second place we learn some things about eternal life here. We learn some things about eternal life. Do you see what Jesus said there in verse 3, he said, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." First, let me give an explanation here. Eternal life refers not only to the quantity of life, how much life, how long it is, but also to the quality of life. It does refer to the quantity of life. When we say eternal life or everlasting life, we're talking about life that never ever ends. It goes on and on and on. That's eternal life. A Christian will never die, the Bible says. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection of the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die he shall live, and whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die." He won't die even though he does die, Jesus says. Why? Because he will see God, he will be with God, he will serve God forever and ever and ever in his kingdom.

There is the quantity of life and when we sang one of the hymns, Pastor Smith said there's a sense in which we come to the enjoyment of this kind of a life now as Christians but then he said, but the greatest is yet to come. That was the introduction to the hymn. The point I'm making now is this, that whole matter of the eternal character, the everlasting character of eternal life is not the whole picture, but as Pastor Smith mentioned, it also refers to the quality of life, if you will, that we enjoy, that we know as Christians on this earth and in this life. And in the Bible, especially in John's gospel, eternal life is not something that the Christian simply waits to enter or he begins at the last day when Jesus comes. That's not when eternal life begins from Jesus' perspective here. What is eternal life then in Jesus' mind? What is it? Well, it's the life that we come into possession of when we believe in Jesus Christ. That is eternal life. That's a heavenly life lived on this earth.

There is one of those hymns that talks about us beginning to enjoy the fruits below of the grace that has begun in our life. I can't quote the exact stanza right now but some of you are familiar with that. We begin to enjoy the fruits here and now. Eternal life means the blessedness of the forgiveness of sins, as David talked about in Psalm 32. That's eternal life. Having a strong hope in the resurrection, the age to come, being confident that that day is coming, be assured that you're going to be a partaker of that resurrection to life when Jesus comes, having the knowledge that these things are so and God is going to bring them to pass and he's going to bless you in that day, that strong hope is part of eternal life.

What about the blessedness of communion with God and walking with God? We walk with him, we talk with him, as one of the hymns says. We know the blessedness of walking with God as opposed to the general emptiness that this life holds for people, the loneliness that people know in this life. I was saying in the school chapel the other day that when we have God as our Father, we don't really need anyone else. In a world of billions of people, if we have God as our Father, we can say with David, "Though my father and mother, the people closest to me and most obliged to love me," he said, "when they forsake me, yet the Lord will take me up." That's eternal life, brethren, to know that you walk with God and that God cares about you, he holds you in his hand. In the midst

of a world where people generally, frankly, don't really care, what a blessing to have the people of God who do care. But their love is very imperfect. This is eternal life, to walk with God, to have satisfaction in God. "Whom have I in heaven," the psalmist says, "Whom have I in heaven but God and besides Him I desire nothing on earth."

Now that's blessedness, is it not, as opposed to a life of grasping for the world only to find in the end that it fails to satisfy and it cuts and burns now and it will disappoint even more fully in the hour of death, and more bitterly it will disappoint, and at the end of all things. That's eternal life, the quality of life that we know in Christ. Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly." He said if you believe in him, and this is not waiting until the final day, he said, "Out of your heart will flow rivers, streams of living water." He said, "If you believe in Me," as he said to that woman, "you will never ever thirst." Sure, we come back to drink again and again and again, but we have had our eternal thirst satisfied when we have drunk of that water as Jesus said to that woman.

We read in Jeremiah 17:8, this is eternal life, brethren, isn't it? "For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit." You say, "That's not my experience." You say, "I believe I'm a Christian but that's not been my experience." Let me just say this: there is no reason in Jesus Christ why that should not be your experience as a child of God. Sometimes he brings you into a drought and into the fire to show you that that really can be the experience of the child of God. The way to know it and live it is by faith in Jesus Christ. Keep looking to him. Cry out to him. Lean upon him. Rest upon him, child of God. That's eternal life.

Then the final thing I want to say has to do with the knowledge of God and eternal life. "This is eternal life," Jesus says, "that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." Do you see the connection there? The knowledge of God and eternal life, to know God is to have eternal life. If you truly know him, not just you know what the Bible says about who God is or about who Jesus is. You need to know those things, you do, but then you need to know him. That's what Jesus is saying. Not just know about him. Just like there are some people we'd say, "Have you ever heard of So-and-so?" Oh yeah, I've heard of him. You know about him. But then we say, "But do you know him?" You say, "Well, I don't know him. He's not my friend." If I walked up to him and he to me, he wouldn't say, "Hi, Dave," and I wouldn't say, "Hi, whoever."

To know God, though, is eternal life and knowing God is therefore the way to eternal life. What does that mean? That means there's only one true God. There are no false gods. There are no other gods through whom you can come to have eternal life. Not Allah. Not any heathen gods. Not nature. Not any idols. Not the God of your imagination or money or whoever or whatever. You must know him, the God of the Bible, to have eternal life and it says you must know him and Jesus says in verse 3, the one he has sent, "this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent."

This means that the only way to know God and have eternal life is through Jesus Christ the Son. Some people say it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter if someone is a Christian and believes everything the Bible says as long as people are sincere, as long as they live decent lives. May I just say this? If God was determined to let everyone into heaven, everyone who wanted to go into heaven just as long as they were sincere, he would not have hung his own sinless Son on a cross outside Jerusalem. But he did hang him there so that the sins of the likes of you and me could be forgiven by his grace. If you would have eternal life, you need to believe in that sinless Son of God who hung on a cross and bled and died 2,000 years ago. That's what you need to do. Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except by Me." He said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of Man must be lifted up that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

I urge you today to believe in him. I plead with you to repent of your sins and to believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God today. Amen.

Let's pray.

Father in heaven, we thank You for Your word and ask now that You would take this word and write it upon our hearts. Father, we thank You for Jesus Christ who prayed for His people. Teach us from this prayer, bring us to a greater understanding of Him, a greater love for Him, a greater gratitude for all He has done for us and bring us to a greater knowledge of and communion with Him whom to know is eternal life. Amen.