

# Great Promise, Great Consequences

By Don Green

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## **Truth Community Fellowship**

Creation Museum

2800 Bullittsburg Church Road

Petersburg, KY 41080

**Website:** [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm)

What we're going to see today is that for all of the wonder of the resurrection that there's something even more marvelous and wonderful that undergirds and secures the certainty of our salvation all the more. Along with the resurrection, the outworking of the resurrection was something that was rooted in things that go back before time began and that's what we're going to see from the book of Titus here this morning. I'd invite you to turn to Titus. That's where we're going to be studying over the next several weeks and at the rate I'm going, maybe until the 22<sup>nd</sup> century, I don't know.

As we're dealing with this introduction in the first four verses of Titus 1, I want to just give you a sense of the fact that brief words that take place in just a very short amount of time can have profound implications that change the direction of life and in the case of Christ, even change the direction of eternity. A young man drops to his knee and says to the girl, "Will you marry me?" An employer calls a college graduate after an interview and says, "You've got the job." A doctor comes out of surgery and tells an anxious family, "Here's what I found." Words that take just a moment to breathe and yet the direction and the trajectory is completely changed in life as a result of that and it's the nature of life, it's the nature of the way that God has designed it, that those really profound trajectory defining moments tend to be rather few and far between. The things that really change the direction of life aren't all that many but when we see them, when we see those kinds of words, we realize that something great and significant has taken place and the significance of it is not measured in time and it's not measured in the length of words, the number of words that are used to express the thought. Short words, short time, can have implications that go on for decades.

Well, beloved, keep that in mind as we come to this passage in the book of Titus, in chapter 1, verses 1-4. The Apostle Paul has written in a compact form, profound words that affect the entire direction of the church of Jesus Christ in general, that affect the direction of Truth Community in the months and years to come and for all of us individually, have profound implications for the way we view our salvation, the way we view ourselves in relationship to God and the security and the assurance with which we hold those beliefs. Don't measure the fact, don't measure, don't try to judge the importance and significance of these words by the fact that we can go through them and read them so quickly. For most of us, we can probably say that we should not try to measure the significance of these words by the amount of time that we've spent studying them in the past. As we read through the Bible, we read through these four verses like that and then we're moving on to what's for lunch.

What I want to tell you today is that we have to slow down and we have to stop and look at this carefully and drink it in. Even for my own self, I have to tell you, I had prepared a much longer message covering a lot more material but I realized today, this morning, we needed to just bring the car to a stop and just park here and think about the significance of what is in front of us and what we are about to consider because these words are holy, they are magnificent, they are profound. They take us to a realm that we could never reach on our own and they have a significance that affects the future of our church, the future of our lives and will resound throughout all of eternity. What we're going to look at today, we are looking at words that literally stretch from before time began to the completion of the world and reach into all of eternity and

have a profound affect on each one of us that name the name of Christ. You could never, never plumb the depths of what we're about to see here this morning.

So, we're going to take our time and not apologize for that. When I say we're going to take our time, we're just going to focus on one little phrase that although it is brief, has profound implications. Look at Titus 1:- 2. That's what we're going to read as we go into our text this morning. The Apostle Paul, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said,

“1 Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, 2 in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.”

Look at that phrase at the end of verse 2 “God who cannot lie,” the unlying God you could say, “promised this long ages ago.” Long ages ago. What I want you to see, just as we start to introduce this, is to realize that Paul is bringing our mind to something that transcends our life and that occurred and was accomplished and was promised long before you or I ever lived. Long before we were ever born and, in fact, we're going to see that it goes much, much further back than that. We're immediately transported out of our immediate present realm to think about something that God did and that God promised and so we have to set aside our lives and we have to set aside the things that we normally think about in order to get in line with what God is saying in his word here this morning. We have to embrace the opportunity to do that. We are being brought, literally we are being brought into the realm of the throne of God before the universe began. This is utterly, utterly inexpressible in its glory. What Paul has written here opens up untold glory about the reality of our salvation.

What we're going to see here today and what you're going to hear are profound things that for some of you, perhaps you have never heard before. These are things that are not often taught on but they are profound, they are clear in the word of God and they will change your understanding of salvation and make you greatly more worshipful and appreciative in response and it will have the certain effect of bringing us to a more God-centered view of our salvation than what we are accustomed to.

We're going to build this around two points, brief points. First of all, we're going to see the great promise. The great promise of salvation. Look at it again with me in verse 2. Paul is speaking about the “the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago.” Follow me here. I'm going to give you a little summary statement and then I'll explain and show you from Scripture why this is absolutely true. Before time began, before the creation of the world, God promised a redeemed people to his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. God, before time began, when it was just the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in their inter-Trinitarian councils, in their intra-Trinitarian eternal existence, God promised to our Lord Jesus Christ, “I am going to give you a redeemed people that will love you throughout all of eternity to come.” This is magnificent! This is glorious! This is inexpressible in its wonder that it should have on our minds. It helps us to see that there is a Christ-centered aspect to salvation that belongs to the Father and the Son alone and all we can do is kind of step back in wonder and awe and bow down and worship and, as it were, put our hands over our mouths because these things are so wonderful and so inexpressibly great that there comes a point for human silence to bow in response in honor of the wonder of what we are seeing. Before time began, God promised a redeemed people to his Son.

Now, look at that phrase at the end of verse 2, “long ages ago” in the NASB that I'm preaching from. In the Greek, that phrase and I very rarely do this. I very rarely refer to the Greek but today we need to do it. In the Greek, that phrase that's translated here “long ages ago” literally means “before times eternal.” The KJV translates it “before the world began.” The NKJV reads “before time began.” The ESV translates it “before the ages began.” The NIV translates it “before the beginning of time.” Beloved, what God has given us in his word here is he has given us the privilege of stepping beyond time, stepping out of our time, out of our culture, out of our present circumstances and, as it were, mentally lifts us and carries us back before creation in order to see what was happening then and what was the point of the interactions among the members of the Trinity. Before time began, God made a promise about salvation.

Now, think with me for just a moment. This is all very evident and plain to see. It's very logical. You don't have to be a theologian to understand this at all. Just think with me for a moment. Before time began, before the world began, God made a promise. Who was there to receive the promise? Who was God making a promise to before time began, before the creation of the world? Who was there for God to make a promise to? There was no one there. There was no man there, that's what's so crucial here. There was not a man present before the beginning of time. That came later; that came into Genesis 1 after God had created the heavens and the earth. So, Paul here is referring to something that precedes time, that precedes creation.

Look at 2 Timothy 1:9. You see this echoed in slightly different language. 2 Timothy, just one book prior to Titus. Paul says in verse 9, God "has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according," watch this, "to His own purpose and grace." This is the purpose and grace of God, "which was granted us in Christ Jesus," Christ is the focus of the purpose of grace and it was granted "from all eternity." So what's going on here? What is the question that is being answered here? Who is the recipient of this promise? There can only be one answer. There can only be one answer. This is not referring to a promise that God made to men. God has made lots of promises to us in his word but this promise was not a promise made to man because it was a promise made before the beginning of time. What we're going to see is that this is a promise, this is referring to a promise that God the Father made to God the Son and in essence said, "I am going to give you a people to redeem that will love you throughout all of eternity."

That's what the promise is and we see this brought out more plainly in Scripture as we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. As you turn back to the gospel of John 6, we'll go back and forth between John and Titus here this morning but in John 6, you're going to see Christ speaking about the redeemed as a people that God the Father has given to him. God the Father has given a people to Christ. Oh, this is just inexpressible. Look, there are times where and don't freak out with what I'm about to say to you here, when you preach the word of God afterward there's sometimes a let down and you think back, "I wish I'd said it a little bit differently," this way or that and the energy has gone forth of preaching and you say, "Ah, I think I'm going to resign." Then you wake up Monday and everything is back to normal and you never act upon those impulses. Today I wanted to resign before I preached because this subject is so magnificent and lofty and holy that you can only feel your utter inadequacy and unworthiness to speak of what God has revealed in his word. This is so lofty and magnificent that you cry out with Isaiah, "Woe is me! I live among a people of unclean lips and I'm a man of unclean lips. We're not worthy to speak of these things that go back to the holy councils of God before the beginning of time." You see, we have to approach this with reverence and worship and humility and to realize that in one sense we're talking about something that only indirectly involves us. God has invited us in, as it were, into the way that he communicated, the way that he loved and the promises that God the Father made to God the Son before time began. Men and women both redeemed and unredeemed, should not enter lightly into that discussion. This is a high and lofty theme that we're looking at and we need to treat it with the utmost humility and reverence that God would grant grace to our souls to bring up.

John 6:37. Let's go back to 35 just to set a little bit of context. "Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. But I said to you that you have seen Me, and yet do not believe.' I'm the Son of God right in front of you, you see me and you don't believe. Verse 37, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." You see, Jesus is speaking about the redeemed as a people that the Father is giving to him. The Father has given a people to Christ that he is to redeem with his lifeblood. Verse 38, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." Before Christ came to earth in the Incarnation, the Father had expressed his will and his will was that Jesus Christ would have a people that would one day belong to him forever and the will of the Father is that Christ would come and purchase that people with his own blood, to be crucified for the sake of their salvation. So Christ having come to earth, being on earth, speaking these words – watch this – is there in the furtherance of an antecedent will of God that sent him in the first place. A prior will of God existed that compelled Christ, that sent Christ to earth and he gladly submitted to that in order to please his Father. "I've come down from heaven," look at it in verse 38, "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." The will of God was formulated before Christ was formulated in the womb of Mary. This is pre-existent. This is magnificent.

Look at it in verse 39. What was that pre-existent will of God? Verse 39, "This is the will of Him who sent Me," Jesus is going to tell us. He says, "This is the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will that I came to earth in order to further and fulfill. "This is the will of Him who sent Me that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day." "He's given me all of these people, all of these people as an expression of his will, of the Father's promise to me that he has given me, he has promised them to me." What is the will of God? It's that I would not lose them but I would raise them up on the last day. How can we know these people that belong Christ? Verse 40, "This is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day." The will of the Father was for the Son to have a people. Christ came in order to purchase them with his life and the will of the Father is that on the final day Christ will raise them up and none of them will be lost. This is the promise and the purpose of God. God promised the redeemed to Christ before time began so that they would honor Christ when time ends.

What does that mean for us? That brings us to our second point this morning, the second point that we would title this way: we saw the great promise and now we're going to see, secondly, the glorious consequences. The glorious consequences. Let me just preface this with this little bit of overview. If you're here and you're a Christian today, you need to understand that God planned all of that out before the foundation of the world. You need to understand and be in awe of the reality that God included you in that redeemed humanity that he promised to his Son. You were part of a love gift from God the Father to his Son and that the Son reciprocated the love to the Father by laying down his life to secure your salvation. You see, we have to move beyond the self-centered way that we've been taught to view salvation as if God were simply a means to further our earthly purposes in our earthly life. Stop it! Stop it! We can't think that way anymore. We cannot think that way anymore. God does not exist to further your purposes in life. You exist to further the purposes of God and the promise of God to his Son. There is a total reversal in our thinking that needs to take place. We exist for the glory of Christ. We exist to live out and to fulfill the promise that God made before time began to his Son. That is the high and lofty and unspeakable, inexpressible privilege that is ours as Christians. When you understand that, when you embrace that, when you internalize that, it completely changes the perspective with which you view your existence.

Beloved, God is gracious to us. God is good to us and God cares for us in our needs. He provides for what we need and he provides for us as we go through the joys and sorrows of life. He is a compassionate, caring, loving God and his mercies are over all of his works Psalm 145 says. We're the beneficiaries of that but don't distort that into thinking that this is all about us. This is all about Christ. That's a means to an end that the Father's inexpressible, eternal love for the Lord Jesus Christ before time began would be expressed through a redeemed people that honor his Son. As it were, God gives this people to his Son and then steps back. Watch this: as Christ's people worship him and honor him now and throughout all of eternity, God the Father will look on that, "Yeah, you know what? You're seeing what I saw from the beginning of time, before the beginning of time. You love my Son and I do too," and we've been added voices to add to those who express praise and glory and thanksgiving and honor to the name of the perfect, impeccable Lord Jesus Christ.

That's why we exist. That's the purpose of your salvation. Not just in time, but throughout all of eternity and so what that does is it transcends our thinking, it transforms our thinking and makes us realize that our salvation and our walk in this life and our hope for eternity to come, it transcends what happens to us. Salvation is utterly transcendent. It's about a promise that God made to his Son before time began. Look, I realize that it's really easy to find teachers who will tickle your ears about what you can get from God. There is no shortage of teachers like that. What I want you to see is that when teachers come and talk about your health, your wealth and all of that stuff, is that it's an utter defacing of the purpose of salvation to make it all about you. They're not doing you any favors when they teach you that kind of stuff, that kind of tripe. You see, Christians find their purpose, they find their joy, they find their satisfaction when they see and understand why they exist and then live out according to that and you exist in order to be an expression of the Father's love to the Son. That's what you're going to be doing throughout all of eternity.

What are the glorious consequences? I'll give you three. I wanted to say more but I'm just going to leave it at three. First of all, we've been hinting at this all along, what are the consequences of the fact that God

promised a redeemed people to his Son before time began and now you and I are here as part of that redeemed people. What are the consequences of that? Well, they're very straightforward actually. First of all is this: we are set apart for Christ. We are set apart for Christ. That's the first consequence. If you're taking notes, the first of the glorious consequences are that we are set apart for Christ and we exist for him to further his purposes rather than him existing to further us in our bloated sense of self-importance.

Go back to the book of Titus and you'll see this with utter clarity and then we'll jump back to the gospel of John again. Titus 2:14. I know if you've been here over the past several weeks, I know we've gone to this verse repeatedly. Do you know what? We'll keep going to it repeatedly because this is fundamental. This defines why you exist as a Christian and in a corporate sense, beloved, this explains why Truth Community has been given birth by God. This is why we exist corporately. It's all about what is expressed here in chapter 2, verse 14 as a furtherance of that great promise that God made to Christ before the beginning of time. Start at verse 13, we are "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, who," speaking of Christ, Christ "gave Himself for us," he laid down his life on the cross for our sake. Why did he do that? Why would he bother? Why would the Son of God come down from heaven and seek to redeem you during the course of his Incarnation and to redeem your brief, transient life? Why would he do that? Why? Why? There is nothing about us that really contributes anything to the perfection of Christ. Why would he do that? "He gave himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people," here it is, "for His own possession, zealous for good deeds."

You see, Christ came down and purchased us out of the slave market of sin and delivered us from that so that we would belong to him, so that we would love him as the Father promised him that we would do, so that we would serve him and honor him and worship him and belong to him. So that we would separate ourselves from our love and affection and bondage to the things of this world and set our minds and our affections on the purity and the perfection and our loyalty to our Lord Jesus Christ. That's why. It's so that we could be a people that belonged to him.

You know, Paul uses marriage as an illustration of the purpose of salvation and compares Christ to the bridegroom and the church to the bride. Well look, the bride gives her affection to her husband uniquely, exclusively. In the design of God, I realize that sin has marred that almost to imperceptibility but in the design of God and in the purity of marriage, the design is for the wife to give her pure affections, undistracted devotion to her husband. Well, that's just a little picture of what it's supposed to be like with Christians loving Christ and devoting themselves to him. That's why we exist. It's because we belong to him. We're set apart for him. All of our aspirations and affections for this world go away, they die. Jesus said, "No one can be my disciple unless he gives up all of his possessions. No one can be my disciple unless he denies himself, takes up his cross and comes after me." There is a total crucifixion of our affections and our love for ourselves and that dies, we crucify it for the sake of gaining Christ so that we belong to him exclusively and that we give to him the undivided affection and worship and devotion of our heart. That's why we exist. We're set apart for Christ.

Turn back to the gospel of John 17. Look at verse 13. As Jesus is praying to his Father, he's on the verge of crucifixion now and he's praying to his Father and he's circling back, as it were, to the purposes of God in sending him, this promise that the Father made to him of giving him a people and Christ is about to lay down his life for his people. In verse 13 he's praying to the Father and he says, "But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Christ did not belong to this earth. He bought a people. He's buying a people here in John. Now we stand in the aftermath of the fact that he's accomplished our redemption and he's taken us out of the world. We no longer belong to the world. He says, verse 15, "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one," and so we're in the world but we're not of the world. He says, verse 16, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." We're like Christ in that way. Christ, in a sense, didn't belong on this earth because the world rejected him. The world had no part in him and Christ says, "Now they're just like me," and so what does he ask the Father on our behalf? Verse 17, "Sanctify them in the truth." Sanctify means to set them apart. "Set them apart in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world," and on it goes.

You see, we're set apart for Christ. You have to realize if you're a Christian, the title deed of your life belongs to Christ, not to you. Your life is a blank check in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ for him to fill out the terms and conditions as he sees fit. It's all about what Christ is doing. It's all about his purpose. We belong to him. We're set apart for him. That is one of the glorious consequences of the fact that God promised a people to his Son. Well, we belong to him, not to ourselves.

Secondly, what does this mean? We're set apart for Christ, secondly, we are secure in Christ. We are secure in Christ. Go back to Titus for just a moment because you see this implied in Titus and then I want to take you to a passage in John that brings this out too. Titus 1:2, we go back to it again. Paul says that he's an apostle "in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago." What was the promise? He promised a people to Christ. He can't lie about that. It's impossible for God to lie. There is no uncertainty. Follow me here, this goes to the very assurance of your salvation. This is important to you. This goes to the very reason that you can have absolute security and assurance in your salvation. It's because your salvation is not rooted in what you do. It is not rooted in the level of behavior that you bring after you make a profession of faith in Christ. There is nothing that you can do that can earn favor with God. There is nothing that you can do that would merit the great gift of salvation that he has given to you. You see, it doesn't depend upon your performance. Our salvation is based upon, it is rooted in, it is secure in this: it is secure in the fact that God promised us as a people to Christ before time began. He says, "I will give them to you. They will belong to you." Jesus said, "Everyone who comes to me will not fall away." We belong to him and the security of our salvation is rooted in the fact that we are the subjects of a promise from God the Father to God the Son that could never be violated. You can't lose your salvation if you're truly saved. That's impossible because if you belong to Christ once, you belong to him forever and if you were to somehow fall away and fall out of that redeemed people, that would mean that God's promise before time began had failed and that can't happen. That's impossible.

So, once we come to Christ and start to understand, "I've really been saved," then we trace that all the way back and realize that that's simply the outworking of the promise of the Father to the Son and therefore the ground of our salvation, the security, the certainty of the good final outcome is the fact that God promised this to his Son and God is never going to break any promise to anyone. But if you can put it this way at the limits of human language, he most certainly would never break a promise to his Son and if we have received salvation, then that is an indication that we're part of the promise that God made to Christ and the security of that is unbreakable. Nothing, nothing can separate us from the love of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Look back at John 10 and you'll see this in the same context of the giving of the Father to the Son. John 10. Drink these words in if you struggle with the assurance of your salvation as a Christian. Jesus says in 10:27, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand." Here it is, verse 29, "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one." Jesus says, "The Father has given them to me. This is the will of the Father that a redeemed people would belong to me forever. I will purchase," here as he's talking in verse 10, "I'm giving eternal life to them." He'll give the bread of his body, as it were, on the cross in order to secure their salvation but the Father has given them to Christ and Christ is purchasing them with his blood. There is nowhere in that equation for anyone to fall through the net of those who are truly saved and it's rooted in the fact not in what you do. Get that thought out of your mind. It's not about what you do. It's about the fact that the Father has given a people to Christ. Christ has secured us with his blood and therefore one of the glorious consequences of this pre-eternal promise of God is that we now who know Christ are secure in him.

Praise God! Praise God that the certainty of the ultimate outcome of your salvation does not rest in your ability to obey Christ perfectly until the end because none of you do that. I don't either. You see, listen, there's a reason I get animated about this stuff, it's because this is about the well-being of your soul and the assurance that you can walk through a very difficult life knowing that the outcome is good for you in the end and if it's not urgent to the preacher, it's hard to see how it's ever urgent for the people to understand and embrace this and love it. You see, it's not about you obeying. This is about the fact that God has an intention on your life that he intends to fulfill and it's secondarily about you but it's primarily about the fact

that he loves his Son and he wants his Son to have this people and he's not going to let anyone or anything interfere with that. Satan is not going to take you out of the hand of Christ. Your sins if you're a Christian are not going to take you out of the hands of Christ. Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. There is a sense in which when we understand the security that we have as a result of the promise of God to Christ, Satan himself must flee in the face of that. He holds no fear for us as Christians because we know that God loves Christ and he will fulfill his promise and that Satan, the weak created being that he is, cannot interfere and disrupt what God has intended for all of eternity to accomplish for his Son in Christ.

We're secure in him. "My Father is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. My Father has given them to me." Christian, look at those words. Look at those words and realize that he's talking about the redeemed and if you're one of the redeemed, Jesus is saying, "My Father has given you to me and no one is able to snatch you out of the Father's hand." We are utterly secure in Christ. God will keep us in Christ so that we belong to Christ in the end so that his promise to Christ before time began will be fulfilled.

The final point for this morning. Those of you who are visiting might be surprised to know that this is a very short sermon for me. Final glorious consequence, the ultimate consequence. This is what we live for. This is what we stand on tip-toes looking for, straining, looking into the future, waiting for, sorting through the mist, waiting for this great final glorious consequence. Point 3: we will see Christ. We will see Christ. What are the glorious consequences? For now, we're set apart for Christ; we're secure in Christ. There is something even better to come: we will see Christ and we will praise him for his glory. We will see his glory with our own eyes, unhindered by sin, with the redeemed through all of the ages and we will look and we will see him and we will be astonished. We'll be amazed. We'll be flabbergasted at the glory of Christ and we will reflexively say, "You are glorious. You are great. Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive glory and honor and praise throughout all of eternity."

Look at John 17 again. Remember, Christians are a gift from the Father to Christ. Salvation is a gift to us, yeah, but it's pre-eminently about the Father's gift to Christ. Jesus is still praying here to his Father before his crucifixion. Look at verse 22, chapter 17, Jesus says, "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me." Okay, now watch this in verse 24. Can I set just a little bit of context in your mind before we look at these great words? Jesus Christ who is God the Son is praying to God the Father. He's impeccable in his righteousness; he knows the will of God perfectly; he obeys it perfectly; he's in perfect unity and harmony with the Father. God the Father loves his Son. The Son loves his Father. Now, with all of that in mind, Jesus, fully omniscient, knowing the will of God, having been there before time began when God made the promise to him, he's about to make a request of his Father. He says, "Father, I want you to do something." Now, before we see what it is that he requests, ask yourself this question: do you think that God the Father answers the prayers of God the Son? Is there any possibility that God the Father who loved Christ before time began and made promises to him, is there any possibility that the Father would fail to do exactly what his Son asks him to do? That's impossible. What we are reading comes in the form of a request that Jesus makes to his Father but what we're about to see is certain to occur because the Father would certainly grant everything that Jesus ever asked him. And what does he say? Who is he thinking about? What is his goal as he expresses the heart of Christ to his Father moments before, as it were, his crucifixion?

Look at verse 24. If I was more demonstrative I'd say, "Let's all take our shoes off before we step onto this holy ground," but that's just not where it's at. Verse 24, here's his prayer, here's his request that he knows in advance his Father will grant. "Father, I desire that they also," these who have believed in me is who he's referring to, "Father, I desire that they also whom You have given Me," there it is again, huh? "I desire that they be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me," there it is again, "before the foundation of the world." Christ says, "Father, I want this people that you have given to me to be with me one day in glory. I want them to see the full unhindered view of the glory which I shared with you before the world began." That's our destiny. That's what's going to happen. We will see Christ and praise him for his glory.

Look, do you want to know if you're a Christian or not? Ask yourself whether that sounds good to you. Unredeemed people are not interested in seeing Christ. They don't love him in this life. They don't serve him. They don't pray to him. They don't read his word. They don't care about Christ in this life and so obviously the idea of seeing him in greater glory in the future would not hold any appeal to them. But beloved, if you are a Christian, something in your heart wells up and draws to and says, "I can't wait for that day to come. I want to see the face of the one who was crucified for my sins. I want to see the one who executed to perfection this divine plan to redeem a people for all of eternity. I want to see him. I want to thank him. I want to bow down and grab his feet and kiss his feet and thank him for his love and mercy and grace which I did not deserve. I want to bow down. I want to kiss his feet and just say, Jesus, thank you. I want to see the face of Incarnate God, the one that I pray to." You say to yourself, "I want to see the face of the one that I've prayed to unseen. I want my faith to become sight. I want to see Christ receiving the glory of which he's so pre-eminently worthy in which men in this life utterly deny him. I want to see the reversal of the order so that Christ is pre-eminent, sinners are banished and there is nothing distracting from the glory of Christ and I want to see it with my own eyes."

Do you know what? That's what Christ wants too. That's what Christ was asking for in John 17:24, "Father, I want them with me in heaven so that they can see this." You are going to have the privilege of an inexpressible clarity of view with physical vision and spiritual understanding of Christ that will utterly dwarf by comparison your experience of Christ in this life. That's what ahead for us. We're going to see him. What does that do to us when we think about it? We're going to see the culmination of an eternal plan of God that he promised to his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. We're going to see that. We're going to be direct participants in the outworking of that promise. We're going to be direct participants in the outworking of the eternal plan for the ages which has nothing to do about anything that's going on in this life, so to speak. All of the politics and all of the different things that dominate the news today are going to be utterly irrelevant at that day when we see Christ in his glory and we look around and we say, I don't know, I kind of picture us looking and saying, "Wow, can you believe we're here? Can you believe how great this is? Why are you looking at me? Look at Christ."

That should do something to your heart. What it should do to your heart is this: you should be thinking, "Who am I to be on the receiving end of something that glorious and magnificent and inexpressible?" You should be utterly humbled if you're a Christian. You say, "At my best I could never have deserved this and yet it's going to be greater than I can ask or think. It's greater than I can imagine here." Sometimes people will say, "Why me? Why are you granting this to me?" Well, do you see the answer to that question is it couldn't possibly be about you? It couldn't possibly be about you deserving that kind of eternal glory? It can't be about that. It has to be about something else, something more transcendent. Something independent of you and me and it is, it's about the fact that the Father loves the Son and has given him a people as an expression of his love. 1 Corinthians tells us that when it's all said and done Christ will just turn around and give it back to the Father as an expression of his love to the Father.

We are lost here in the wonder, glory and awe of the magnificent purposes of God revealed in Scripture. We are lost in wonder, awe and praise of the fact that we get to participate in it. We are lost in wonder, awe and praise of how this puts this brief fleeting life into perspective and gives us the ability to transcend whatever life throws at us with a joyful glad heart. "I'm going to heaven. I'm going to see Christ in his glory. God has made me part of an eternal promise to his Son." What were we talking about? Glorify Christ, beloved, love him and look forward to this great day which is certainly coming and let that sweeten your walk in this life.

Bow with me in prayer.

*Father, human words can't do justice to this and so I just pray that you would take your word and expand our understanding and deepen our ability to know this and appreciate it and to respond with gratitude and praise to you for it. Father, we realize that there's always those present who don't know Christ. Father, we don't want them to miss out on this. If you're not a Christian, I point you to Christ. On the authority of God's word, I tell you that you've fallen short of his glory and you're not worthy of any of this. You need Christ to save you. You need to turn from your sin and embrace Christ as your only hope of salvation. Do*



*you know what? He's gracious. He's loving. He's merciful. He's good. He said, "I'll never turn away anyone who comes to me."*

*My friend, if you die without Christ, it will be entirely your fault and your responsibility because here today he is extending himself to you and saying, "I will receive you if you come to me and I will let you participate in the wonder of this glory that's been described to you here this morning. Father, have mercy on unredeemed hearts today. Draw them to your beloved Son.*

*We stand back, we bow down and we honor you and we worship you. We're in a realm, Father, that we shouldn't be here in one sense, and yet your word is revealed and you've made known to us the purposes of your salvation of those who belong to Christ. You our Father are a great unspeakably wonderful God to have loved your Son, to make a promise that you would never break and then to spill it over, as it were, and let us share in it. O God, we adore you and worship you for your goodness and we thank you for letting us be a part of the outworking of your eternal plan and, Father, we do, as it were, we stand on tip-toes looking, anticipating, waiting for the fulfillment of this great future hope. Bring it to pass, Lord, and in the meantime let us be faithful as we serve you here in this place. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*