

The Lord's Greatest Prayer, Part 7

Scripture: John 17:20–23

Code: 43-99

For now, we return to the 17th chapter of the gospel of John, and I confess to you that this has been an exhilarating spiritual experience for me to have been in this chapter for a couple of months now. It is more than I can almost contain to read through this, to study through it, to think about it, to read all kinds of commentaries and books that reflect on this chapter. It is a jewel, a rare jewel in Scripture. It is the only place where we have the intercessory work of our Lord Jesus Christ before the Father literally laid out for us verbatim. We know our Lord ever-lives to make intercession for us, and this is the intercession that He makes. This goes on all the time since His ascension until the end of the age; and this is then hearing the Lord Jesus Himself praying for us, His people, before His loving Father.

It's a remarkable chapter. One could spend endless time here. There are many things that we've seen here and there are many things that we haven't seen. There are things too vast for us to grasp, and there are things that we can grasp and they overwhelm us.

In the 1st verse, we read, "Jesus spoke these things," meaning everything He had said recorded in chapter 13, 14, 15, and 16, all the things that He had said to the disciples on that Passover night. And now all of His speaking to them has ended, and on the way to the garden of Gethsemane where He will pray, struggle with the temptation and be arrested, and then crucified a few hours after that, on the way, He stops; and with His disciples listening, He lifts His eyes to heaven and He said, "Father, the hour has come, the hour has come."

What hour is this? It is the hour of His glory. It will start with the crucifixion, be followed by the resurrection, and then the ascension, and then the exaltation, and then the coronation. It all begins here on that night. This is a night that has been anticipated throughout all eternity and throughout all time up to this point. This is a night that begins a sequence of events that shapes eternal destiny for all of God's people who've ever lived on this earth.

More specifically, it's Thursday night when it all begins; Thursday night, when during Passion Week, there is the celebration of the Passover. For Galilean Jews, they celebrated it on Thursday night; and since they were Galileans, Jesus and the disciples, they gathered in an upper room to celebrate the Passover. The Passover was a feast that God instituted back in Exodus 13 and 14 to commemorate His miraculous deliverance of Israel. After 400 years of slavery in Egypt He delivered them, and that had been 1,500 years ago. So for 1,500 years, the Jews had celebrated God's deliverance out of Egypt.

It was an amazing and miraculous deliverance, as you know. You know about the plagues. You know about the slaying of the firstborn if the doorposts weren't covered with blood. You know about the institution of the sacrificial lamb, the Passover meal. You know about the deliverance of the people of Israel. You know about the parting of the Red Sea and the drowning of Pharaoh's massive hordes following after them. That great event was the most monumental deliverance that God had

ever done on behalf of His people in history. But that night as they met to celebrate that, they were on the brink of an even more monumental deliverance, the deliverance that God would give to His people through the death of His Son – a deliverance that was not physical, but a deliverance that was spiritual.

So that night at the Passover, the Lord transformed the Passover. That's the last official Passover to be held. The Lord transformed that commemorative feast into the Lord's Table, the Communion, and that goes back to the cross, which is, unquestionably, God's greatest act of deliverance. Our Lord then gathered for that evening with His twelve apostles. Satan entered Judas, who was a son of perdition and never a son of God; and he left to go carry out the betrayal which is about to happen, as we'll see in the next chapter. As they gathered that night, it was a deeply troubling night. In the prior chapter, chapter 12, we read that our Lord Jesus' soul was deeply troubled. He was fully aware that the Friday was coming, and that Friday He would die as God's chosen sacrifice for the sins of His people.

In chapter 12, He says His hour has finally come. And here at the beginning of chapter 17, He says it again, "The hour has come." And the first event of that hour in which He will ultimately be glorified is His crucifixion. It's little wonder that His soul is deeply troubled. And the horror for Him is not what men will do to Him, but what God will do to Him. It is not what the Jews and Romans are about to do to Him physically, it is what God is about to do to Him spiritually – to lay on Him the iniquity of us all, and then punish Him for all the sins of all the people who will ever believe through human history. On that eve, pregnant with inconceivable terrors for Him, His mind is set not on Himself, but on His disciples, and on how much He loves them.

In chapter 13, verse 1, we read as it begins, "Before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end," to the max. He loved them infinitely. And I've been telling you that this section is based on love. It is a section of love. What most marks His righteous soul, even in the midst of the torment and trouble, anticipating not only what men would do to Him, but even more what God would do to Him, He is still caught up in how much He loves His own. The boundless love of those unworthy eleven is expressed throughout this section, throughout that evening and on into Friday morning.

He first expressed His love – in chapter 13 it tells us – by washing their filthy feet, something they wouldn't stoop to do for each other; but He stooped to do for all of them. He even washed the feet of that devil-filled Judas. But after Judas left and following the washing of their feet, which is an act of physical love, He explodes in spiritual love on the remaining eleven disciples, and He gives them love's promises, the promises of divine love: a promise of heaven that He's going to prepare a place for them in the Father's house; the promise of power to do greater works than He did – not greater in kind, but greater in extent; they will literally cover the globe eventually – the promise that anything they need He will supply from heaven through prayer; the promise that the Holy Spirit is going to come and be in them, and the Holy Spirit will empower them and tell them what to say, and teach them everything that God wants them to know.

Love's promise also granted them peace, His peace. He promised them forgiveness of sin, of course, but He also promised them fruitfulness, that they would bear much fruit. He also promised them persecution, hatred, and even death. But in the end, He promised them that He would overcome the hostile world, and He promised them a joy that no one could ever take away. All those

are the promises of divine love given to a group of men who were weak, and vacillating, and struggling, and self-centered, and preoccupied with their own ambition. They were promises of love, but they were promises of grace as well. These were the eleven men who were going to be critical to the divine enterprise of redemption.

At the end of chapter 15, our Lord had said to them, “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you will testify also, because you’ve been with Me from the beginning.” “You are the first generations of gospel preachers. You will testify. You also are the ones that the Spirit of God will inspire, along with your associates, to write the New Testament.” This seems so remote because they were a highly disturbed group. They were profoundly troubled.

Chapter 14, verse 1, that very night He said, “Stop letting your heart be troubled. Stop.” The end of verse 27, same chapter, “Stop letting your heart be troubled and letting it be fearful.” Chapter 16, the same thing. He says, “You have grief now,” grieving, troubled, fearful, terrified at the fact that their Lord kept saying, “I’m leaving, I’m going away, and where I go you are not able to come.”

The possibility that what He said to them, “You will testify about Me because you’ve been with Me from the beginning,” the possibility that that would actually happen was remote in their minds and in the minds of anybody who knew the story only up to this point. That very night, their weakness would be on full display. The very night that Jesus was arrested, they would be seen as weak. In fact, before the arrest of Jesus in the garden, our Lord took them in for a time of prayer to pray with Him, and their weakness was on full display because they fell asleep in the sleep of fear; and then when the arrest came, they scattered.

Matthew 26:56 says, “They all fled.” They ran terrified at His arrest. And it got worse; their leader blatantly, time after time after time, denied that he even knew Jesus, and he did so with curses. How is it possible that these men, so weak, so vacillating, so fearful, so doubtful, so scattered, could ever fulfill what our Lord said that “you will testify of Me”? Something dramatic has to happen.

How is that to be different? Well, the difference comes in two things. One, the Holy Spirit will come upon them, Acts 1:8, “And when the Spirit comes upon you, you shall be witnesses.” The Spirit will empower them for witness. But there’s another very critical element. Not only will the Holy Spirit come to empower them for witness, but Christ Himself will pray for them.

Do you remember in Luke 22 when Peter was being buffeted by Satan and Jesus said to him, “I have prayed for you that your faith fail not. And when you are converted, you will strengthen the brethren”? That’s a microcosm of the intercessory prayer of our Lord Jesus that keeps a vacillating disciple strong.

Yes, of course, the coming of the Holy Spirit plays a role, but so does the intercessory ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we’ve gone through that 17th chapter and we’ve seen it. The opening five verses He prays that He would be glorified; and then when He is glorified, He will pray continually, ever-living to make intercession to bring all His sons to glory. And so we’ve learned from this chapter that He prays for those disciples; but not only for those disciples, but verse 20 says, “for all who will believe in the future.”

So He's praying for all believers through all of human history. And what is it He prays for? We saw that in verses 11 to 19. He prays for our spiritual security, that we will be safe and brought to glory. He prays for our spiritual felicity, or spiritual joy, that we'll know His joy made full in spite of the persecution, the hostility, and the challenges. And then He prays for our immunity that we'll be kept from the evil one –Satan, the adversary. And then He prays, in verses 17 to 19, for our spiritual purity, that we'll be sanctified by the Word.

Now all of this is His praying for us while we're in the world, while we're in the world. So as a result of His prayers and the power of the Holy Spirit, the disciples will be transformed. They will literally transcend their weaknesses in a divinely granted usefulness that has no parallel. They will be eleven men who turned the world upside-down, and they will be the foundation for the spiritual temple of believers that is the dwelling place of God. That's what it says in Ephesians with Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone. So it is His prayer that establishes these apostles as the preachers of the gospel. In that first generation, they become the foundation of the church. And despite of what it looks like, they're going to be that because of the power of the Spirit and the prayers of the Son of God.

Now with that as kind of a lead up, let's look at verse 20. And I remind you that verse 6 said He was praying to the disciples whom the Lord had given Him. But verse 20 says, "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word." So He's praying to the Father for the eleven, but beyond that, for all who will believe through their word.

This is the third "do not ask" by the way. This is the third time He has had a negative in this prayer. Back in verse 9, He said, "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world." He doesn't pray for unbelievers. In verse 15, "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but keep them from the evil one. And in verse 20, "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those who will believe in Me through their word." He is praying only for believers; He is praying for believers in the world; and He's praying not just for the eleven, but all believers in the world.

Now, verse 20 is very, very important. He says that "those who believe in the future in Me will believe through their word," the word of the apostles. They will be empowered by the Holy Spirit, they will preach the gospel, and they will write the New Testament. The New Testament, in a real sense, is their word. It's the apostles' doctrine written down, the apostles' doctrine inspired and written under the direction of the Holy Spirit. So this doubting group of fearful, scattering weaklings will become a force that literally will empower the gospel through all the rest of human history.

This began at Pentecost when the Spirit of God came upon them, and they began to preach on the very day of Pentecost in Acts 2; and they began to preach in Acts 2, and they preach all the way through the book of Acts, that first generation of preachers. Many believed through their word, even when their word was not written down, it was only preached. That's what the book of Acts gives to us. While they were preaching through the book of Acts, the apostle Paul and the other apostles are writing the epistles. So people believed, in that first generation, through their preaching; and in all subsequent generations, through their writing.

In Jude 17, we are reminded of how important their word is. Jude says, "You, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ." If you want to set a right course for truth against false doctrine, which is Jude's subject, you had better remember the word spoken by the apostles. Not only spoken, but inscripturated in the books of the New Testament.

So the prayers of the Great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, to the Father on behalf of the apostles were answered with astonishing divine clarity, so that God gave them a clear understanding of the gospel which they preached; and while they were preaching, they were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the books of the New Testament so that when they disappeared from the earth and the age of the apostles was over, the theology that God had given to them would be in Scripture for every generation in every country and every language through human history.

Ask yourself the question, "What role does the New Testament play in salvation? What role does the New Testament play in salvation?" I'll tell you what role it plays: people can't be saved unless they understand what's in the New Testament. Our Lord prays for His people yet unborn that they will believe, that they will believe in Him through the word of the apostles.

Break it down this way: the object of saving faith is the Lord Jesus Christ, the time of saving faith is the future – all redemptive history, the power of saving faith is the Holy Spirit, the instrumental means of saving faith is the Word of God given through the apostles and their associates who wrote the New Testament. Scripture becomes the instrument of saving faith. "I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation," says Paul in Romans 1:16. And then in Romans 10, "Faith comes by hearing, hearing the truth concerning Christ," hearing or reading that truth.

It says about Lydia in Acts 16:14, "The Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul." So the preached word which was based upon divine revelation, the written word which is that revelation inscripturated, is the instrumental means of salvation. People are not saved apart from the message. "Anyone can call on the Lord – " Romans 10 says " – but how are they going to call on one they don't know? How are they going to know if they don't have a teacher? How are they going to have a teacher or preacher unless somebody is sent? Faith comes by hearing a speech concerning Christ."

So He's praying now for all the people who will ever believe through the apostles' doctrine whether they preached it in that first generation or used by the Spirit of God, wrote it down for every subsequent generation. He gathers all of those believers in His prayer. And for what does He pray? Two things: for all of us, because we are those who believe in Him through the apostles' word; two requests. Request Number One: "That they would be one in this world." Request Number Two: "That they would be one in the next world." He's praying for their unity, unity in this world and unity in heaven. That's the two requests. The first one, "unity in this world" is in verses 21 to 23. The second one, "unity in heaven" is the finale in verses 24 to 26. We'll save that for next time.

He's praying for unity; it's been on His mind. He mentioned it at the end of verse 11, "Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are." All through the gospel of John, we know that the Father and the Son are one. Our Lord says it again and again and again, and so He's now praying for a oneness that is like the oneness shared between the Father and the Son.

A lot of times, you hear preachers preach on this and they say, "The emphasis of our Lord here is that we all ought to get along in the church, and we all ought to get along in the family, and we need to work on our unity." That is not what he's talking about. He's not talking about some practical unity for several reasons, one, because He says it is a unity like that between the Father and the Son. It is

something internal, not external.

Furthermore, He can't be praying about the unity of everyone who will ever believe, because everyone who ever believes doesn't live at the same time. We're all strung out so far for 2,000 years, through millennia. What He's praying for is clear in His words. The kind of unity He's praying for is "even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us."

It is an essential internal unity. He is not praying that we all get along at church. There are other parts of the Bible that address that, but not here. What He is essentially praying for – listen – is the future salvation of the elect. He is praying that we who believe in Him will receive the life of God, eternal life. He's praying for the salvation of His people; that's where His prayer begins. He prays for the future salvation of people not yet converted, not yet born.

It is the internal unity of divine spiritual eternal life. "Father, give them the life that we possess, eternal life. May they have Your life and My life in them; Your Spirit, My Spirit, in them; a unity of life as that which is shared between the Father and the Son." He is praying that we would possess eternal life, the life of God.

This life of God possessed by the Father and the Son means they have one will, one motive, one mission, one truth, one holiness, one purpose, because they possess one life. That's why Jesus says, "I and the Father are one. If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father. I only do what the Father wills. I only do what the Father says. I always honor the Father, glorify the Father."

Everything between the Father and the Son is a perfect unity of life, of life. That is absolutely critical to understand – and I mentioned this a few weeks, and I'll just say it again. God, the true God, has to be a trinity, He has to be a trinity. If God is not a trinity, then you have an eternal being absent the attribute of love. If there is an eternal being who is only solitary, then eternally He does not love because there is no one to love. That is why God and Allah are not the same, and that is why there is zero love in Islam.

The essential starting point of Christianity is a God who is three-in-one who is marked by relationships of love. God is love. This is absolutely critical to understand. And a shared life between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit expresses itself in that relationship. God is defined in relationship, and we are made in His image for relationships with others and with Him. The Father and the Son are of the same nature, they possess the same life, and the Lord prays for such a union of shared life for all who believe. That is a staggering reality. It isn't just that you are who you are and you are forgiven, it is that when you come to Christ, you are forgiven. But you have been transformed; you are not who you were.

John understood this, and when he wrote his first epistle, he made it clear at the very beginning. He says concerning Christ, "The life was manifested. We've seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life – " meaning Christ " – which was with the Father and was manifested to us. What we have seen and heard, we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us, partnership with us; and, indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." John understood that to be saved is to come into a union of life with the Trinity. You literally are drawn up into the Trinity – drawn up, pulled up out of Satan's kingdom, out of death, out of darkness into the Trinity.

Believers are said to be in the Father, in the Son, and in the Spirit. And it is said in Scripture that the Father is in us, and the Son is in us, and the Spirit is in us. Those are just ways to demonstrate that we are all wrapped up in the reality of divine life. We don't become God, but we share His life. We aren't eternally the possessors of that life, but He creates that life in us, true life; and that's why Bible says we are new creations and old things pass away.

You might say it this way: "God became joined to man in the person of Jesus Christ so that man could be joined to God in the person of Jesus Christ." Follow that again: "God became joined to man in the person of Jesus Christ so that man could be joined to God in the person of Jesus Christ."

He became one of us that we might become one with Him. We are in Christ. We live in God as believers, and God lives in us. We live in Christ and Christ lives in us. We live in the Spirit and the Spirit lives in us. Jesus is one with the Father, and we are one with Jesus Christ, so we are one with the Father also. We share His spiritual eternal life.

This is the language of Ephesians 1 where we read about all those spiritual blessings. But notice the importance of a preposition here, very important preposition, "We are blessed with every spiritual blessing – " and then you read " – in Christ." And then in verse 4, "in Him." And then in verse 6, "in the beloved." Verse 7, "in Him." Verse 9, "in Him." Verse 10, "in Him." Verse 12, "in Christ." Verse 13, "in Him, in Him," and so it goes. We literally have become transported into the very life of Christ. Powerful implications can't be missed here.

So as believers, we know God, not at a distance and secondhand, but near and firsthand. We know God, not vaguely as if unclear, but distinctly without confusion. We know God, not doubtfully as if insecure, but confidently. And how do we know God so well? Because He lives in us and we in Him; and in that, He has given us understanding of the revelation of Himself in Holy Scripture. Being in the Father and in the Son, and the Father and Spirit in us, what incredible reality.

It doesn't yet appear what we are going to be. The glory that we are, the people that we are, the life that we possess is not yet manifested. But when you think about it this way, let me ask you a question. Should not being in the Father and in the Son, and having the Father and the Son in us, bring us more comfort, more joy, more satisfaction, more contentment, more peace, more hope than any soul could ever even grasp?

You want a motive for sanctification; here's one, here's one, here's the supreme one. Being one with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is infinitely more joyous and blessed than all the comforts and riches of the world; or, if that were not true, our life in heaven will be worse than life here on earth. Did you get that? Being one with the Trinity is infinitely more joyous and blessed than all the comforts and riches of the world; or, if that were not true, our life in heaven would be worse than our life here on earth. If that's not true, the joy of heaven will be far below and worse than our earthly happiness.

Why am I saying that? Because in heaven, there will be nothing but God and His glory: no sun, no moon; no creatures to entertain us; no sunrise, no sunset, no starry nights; no earthly fancies, no pretty things; only God. God will be all-in-all; His glory will fill the heavens. Father, Son, and Spirit are all our delight in heaven. God is everything in heaven to satisfy us and give us superlative and

eternal joy. He is all and in all.

So think of this; if the Lord is not as precious to me here as all the creatures and creation we leave behind, as all the comforts and satisfactions we lose on leaving, then heaven becomes a loss and not a gain, because there, God is all we have. Let me say it another way. When you have in this life the least interest in creature comforts and the most interest in God, you are nearest to the bliss of heaven. This prayer request is for all that salvation is. And to think of it, we are sinners and we have been lifted to this elevation, raised to incomparable privilege – transcendent, honor, shared holiness; what grace, and how humbling. Certainly, we wouldn't want to take credit for it, would we? We wouldn't want to take credit for that, that's blasphemous. We might want to tremble at the implications.

Another practical thing that must be said by this reality of being one with God in God and God in us, sin must be made more strange, more alien, more ugly. Do we sin in God and with God in us? Sin can't be committed by God, but it is committed all the time by people who are in God. What audacity; what extreme wretchedness that is.

The apostle Paul says, "Do you know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be! Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee immorality. Do you not know your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You're not your own, you've been bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body." What audacity to sin in God. But the sins of unbelievers are committed out of God, apart from Christ. Ours are committed in God and in Christ, and they deserve to be chastened for such shameful disgrace.

Now, our Lord has a reason for our unity in this life. He says it in verse 21 at the end, "so that the world may believe that you sent Me." If we live the kind of lives that we ought to live consistent with what God has done for us and in us, believe me, the world is going to see a massive transformation. If the world is going to see this internal unity, there's going to be an attraction to the gospel. That's how Philippians 2 says, "We shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life."

Now, as if we hadn't reached the heights of divine favor and grace to unworthy sinners, the Lord has more to say. He prays further, verse 22, and we'll start at the end of the verse. Again He's praying, "that they may be one, just as WE are one." Again, it's unity that's on His mind: unity, spiritual unity, eternal unity, the unity that comes from possessing the life of God given to us to make us one.

But He even enriches it. The front of the verse He says this: "The glory which you have given Me I have given to them." It isn't just life, it's glory – God in us, Christ in us, the Spirit in us, "We in them." We have life. But here He says we have glory, "The glory which You've given to Me I have given to them."

Now, what glory is this? Well, as God, the Son of God, the eternal Son of God, receive no glory from the Father; He always possessed glory. As God, the eternal Son, the second member of the Trinity, received no glory from the Father. The Father gave Him no glory as the eternal Son. But when He became man, as man He was given glory by the Father. John 1:14 says that: "We beheld His glory, that glory being that of the only begotten of the Father." It was the glory of God, 2 Corinthians 4:4,

shining in the face of Jesus Christ.

So in His condescension and in His stepping down and in His humiliation, He became man. But the Father gave Him glory, gave Him glory. And here He says, "Father, the glory which You have given Me I have given to them." The Father gave the glory to the Son, who became the express image of His glory, "the radiance of His glory," Hebrews 1. And the Son turned right around and gave the glory to us so that we, according to 2 Corinthians 3:18, as we gaze at His glory begin to reflect it, and the Spirit moves us from one level of glory to the next, to the next.

In verse 10 of 17, the end of the verse Jesus says, "I have been glorified in them. I have been glorified in them. My glory is in them." His glory is His attributes, and His attributes are on display in His people. When Jesus humbled Himself and became a man, God granted Him full glory. The glory was veiled and only seen for a glimpse at the transfiguration during His earthly life.

He passed that glory onto us. It is veiled in us, but it is here, it is there. We are new creations; we possess the characteristics of God in some measure and some degree. This is remarkable because Scripture says twice in Isaiah 42 and 48, quoting God, "My glory will I not give to another. My glory will I not give to another." But He gave it to His Son who deserved it, and His Son gave it to us who didn't deserve it, because we are in Him. We share in His life, His resurrection, His exaltation, His coronation, and His eternal reign.

What did His glory bring Him? Virtues, titles, privilege; and because we're in Him, we receive virtues, titles, privileges. God will not be glorious alone. Christ will not be glorious alone. Throughout all eternity, it is the plan of the Trinity to radiate their glory through a redeemed people. This is a stunning thing. No wonder the Bible says that the world doesn't understand what a true Christian is. It's hard for us to grasp this.

And even when we are in heaven and are radiating His glory and are as all glorious as we can possibly be, we will not receive that glory, but we'll turn and give it all to Him who deserves all the glory. He is the glory, we're only reflectors. But our Lord is praying a prayer that expands our understanding of salvation. We have God's life in us. We have God, the triune God, in us. We have the glory of God, the manifest attributes of God that are communicable to us in us; and forever and ever we will radiate and reflect that glory.

And then in verse 23, He repeats the request for unity again: "I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity." Again it's this desire for unity while we're in the world. He's praying for while we're in the world "so that the world may know that You sent Me." This is always the objective, "so that the world may know You sent Me." So critical.

Back in verse 8, "They believed that You sent Me." Verse 18, "As You sent Me into the world, I've sent them into the world." Verse 21, the same thing, "that the world may believe that You sent Me, that is that I came from heaven." Here it is again, "that the world may know that You sent Me." Our unity is to be manifest unity, the life of God revealed on earth through believers so that the world will know that Jesus came from heaven.

Now we're almost out of oxygen at the point because we have been taken to such spiritual heights, and we are in the thin air of spiritual atmosphere in the heavenlies and can barely breathe, our Lord

takes us higher. I feel like I need an oxygen mask for verse 23b: "Father, I want the world to know that You love them, even as You have loved Me." "Make them one, Father. Give them salvation in all its fullness, common shared life with You and Me, so the world will know that You loved them, even as You have loved Me."

Do you understand salvation's all about divine love? It's all about love. Behind all this work of salvation, behind this prayer for unity, behind the prayer for glory is love. It's because of love. Salvation is because of love. All these promises from chapters 13 to 16 are because of love. All this praying and intercession is because we are loved. And in what way are we loved and to what degree are we loved? The Father loves us as He loves the Son.

So how does He love the Son? Well, He loves the Son infinitely. He loves the Son eternally. He loves the Son intimately. He says, "He's My beloved Son in whom I'm well pleased." But He loves us the same because we are in His Son.

You say, "Well, isn't the Father offended by our sins?" He is. He is very offended by our sins, and He was offended with His Son when our sins were placed on Him. God is angry over our sins, but He spent His anger on His Son in our place.

Here's the good news; His anger is over, His anger is over. He has no lasting anger. Love has replaced His anger. His anger was brief; His love is forever. His anger lasted about three hours of darkness on Friday.

You say, "Well, wait a minute; He chastens us; He disciplines us." Yes, but listen to what Scripture says, Hebrews 12:6, "Those whom the Lord loves He disciplines and scourges." It's not out of anger anymore, it's out of what? Love. He's angered with the wicked every day and forever. For us it was all exhausted at Calvary, and the Father now loves us as He loves the Son.

How does He love the Son? He loves Him infinitely, infinitely, without measure. And that's how He loves, chapter 13, verse 1. He loves us *eis telos*, to the max, to the ultimate, infinitely. He can't love us more, He can't. He can't love you more than He loves you now. He loves you infinitely.

And then He loves us eternally. He will never cease loving the Son and He will never cease loving us. He loves us like He loves the Son. He loves the Son infinitely; He'll love us infinitely. He loves the Son eternally; He'll love us eternally; and that's why Romans 8 says, "Nothing can ever separate us from the love of God which is ours in Christ."

And He loves us intimately. He does not love the Son distantly, He loves the Son because the Son is one with Him; and He loves us because we are in the Son, one with Him. He doesn't love us in a different way as if He loved us as a friend and rather than a son, He loves us as sons. In His Son He loves us intimately, eternally, intimately, and grants us all the inheritance that belongs to the Son of His love, and we become joint heirs with Christ.

So it's out of this love that all His promises have come, and all His prayers. We can never be out of His love, never. He loves us in such a way that He couldn't love us more. He loves us forever. He loves us personally. Our sins are temporary, finite, and impersonal. His love is eternal, infinite, and personal.

So what is your response? What should be your response? Our Lord prompted Peter in John 21. He asked Him three times, “Peter, do you – ” what? “Do you love Me? Do you love Me? Do you love Me back?” John writes, “We love Him because He first loved us.”

You want to say, “Yes, Lord, Yes,” like Peter, right? “Yes, Lord. Yes, Lord. Yes, Lord.” But in John 15:9 and 10, He says, “The one who loves Me keeps My commandments.” And 1 John says, “If you love Me, you not only keep My commandments, you love the other people who love Me.”

So what should mark our lives? We are so loved: loved to God, loved to each other, and obedience, loving obedience – not out of law, but out of love. So what a prayer this is. On the very day that the perfect holy, sinless Son of God would suffer the full fury of His Father’s anger for all that is unloving and hateful about us, when all that is ugly and deadly, all that is worldly, fleshly, devilish was to be placed on Him, He can only feel how much He loves those for whom He will suffer this. Dear believer, you are loved.

Father, we thank You for the promise of Your Word, for every truth becomes for us a promise. Thank You for opening our hearts and minds to the grandeur of our salvation in fresh ways. We are so blessed, so grateful; and may our gratitude manifest itself in the ways that it should in loving You and showing that love by loving those who love You, and obeying You out of love.

Father, we ask now that You do a work in every heart, a work that would bring You glory. We have no words that can express a proper thanks; and we will spend forever in Your presence pouring out praise and never grow weary. Do Your work in every life, we pray. Amen.

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