

# Our Lord's Prayer of Intercession Pt. 1

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 17:1-10  
**Preached on:** Sunday, April 9, 2017

I invite you to take your Bibles and turn to John 17 this morning. We're going to step away from our study of Hebrews and I would like to do a two part series on our Lord's prayer of intercession. In a moment, we'll look at the first 10 verses of John 17.

As I've already stated in our Scripture reading, today is Palm Sunday commemorating Jesus' final entry into Jerusalem and as a footnote from the outset, it was more likely on Monday rather than traditional Palm Sunday that after Jesus had been in Bethany with Lazarus, that he made his way through the eastern gate of Jerusalem. A Monday triumphal entry is important because in Exodus 12:2-6 we see that the Mosaic law required sacrificial lambs for Passover to be selected on the tenth day of the first month and then taken into the home to be loved until the time for sacrifice on the 14<sup>th</sup> and only a Monday triumphal entry would fulfill that very important symbolism because the year Jesus was crucified, the 10<sup>th</sup> of Nisan was on Monday of the Passover week. This would allow the Jews to nationally select Jesus as their Passover lamb, to symbolically take him into their home, their hearts to love him, and then tragically to sacrifice him on Friday, the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan.

But today I wish to focus on an amazing event that took place on Thursday on the eve of his crucifixion that took place on Friday morning, an event that took place somewhere near the garden of Gethsemane with Jesus' 11 disciples. This could really be called the Lord's prayer of intercession and it's recorded here for us in John 17 and I'm convinced that most people, even many Christian people as they approach the Easter season, tend to have more enthusiasm about Easter eggs, bunnies, baskets and bonnets than they do the glorious truths of what happened at that time. Frankly, the commercialization of Easter is a satanically inspired blasphemy designed to trivialize the most momentous event in all of history, what the writer of Hebrews describes as the consummation of the ages, and that is the crucifixion and resurrection of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. If you were to ask the average Christian to briefly summarize what transpired during that last week of Jesus' earthly ministry, what is commonly called the Passion Week that culminated in his death, his burial and resurrection, sadly most people would really not know what really happened nor would they understand how it fit into God's plan of redemption, yet these magnificent truths are the very basis of our hope of our salvation.

So as we come to John 17, let me give you a bit of the context here so we know what's happening and really get a sense of what's on the heart of our precious Savior. After raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus dramatically entered into Jerusalem to celebrate

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Passover and he was hailed by the masses, as we read a few minutes ago in Luke 19, they hailed him as their Messiah King, shouting, "Hosanna, to the son of David!" "Hosanna" means "save now." This was the same crowd who in a few days would cry out, "Crucify him!" And his disciples and many thousands of followers were certain that he was the promised Messiah; that he was ready to overthrow Rome; that they were going to be liberated; that he was going to establish that long promised earthly kingdom, but they did not understand that he came first to be their Savior, to be the Passover Lamb.

As he comes into Jerusalem as we read the historical account in the Gospels, we see that the first thing he did was to cleanse the temple and he literally possessed the temple for a couple of days. Jewish leaders hated him because he exposed their hypocrisy, their self-righteous pride, and certainly they rejected his claim to be the Son of God and they even attributed his miracles to Satan. And now just before his arrest and crucifixion, the Lord is in his upper room, a house celebrating the Passover meal with his disciples. He has washed their feet. He revealed that Judas would betray him. He revealed that he was about to die. He revealed that Peter would deny him. And the disciples are absolutely stunned. Their euphoria has quickly turned to dismay, even to despair, and Jesus quickly comforted them in John 14:1, he says, "Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." At that time, he also promised that the Holy Spirit would come and be their helper; that he would teach them all things and bring to remembrance all that he had said to them. And it was at this time that Jesus instituted the Lord's supper that commemorated his death, and also a real picture of the fellowship that we as believers enjoy with God, and a reminder of what was necessary for the new covenant to become a reality.

Then after his farewell discourse in John 14, he abruptly departed from the upper room with his disciples. He led them outside of the city across the Kidron Valley over the lower reaches of the Mount of Olives and on the way he gives his disciples a discourse on the true vine and on the ministry of the Holy Spirit in John 15, John 16. Then in John 16:20, we learn that Jesus encouraged them by saying, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy." He was alluding, of course, to his death. They would grieve over his death but later on rejoice over his resurrection. Only after his resurrection would the disciples grasp why his death was necessary. They would finally see that Jesus himself was the Passover Lamb, the perfect substitute for sin that satisfied the justice of a holy God and reconciled sinful man to him. And after warning them of the great trials that God would allow to come upon them, he gave them a final word of encouragement in John 16:33. He said,

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"These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."

Then after that sober reminder of trials as well as triumph, as they approached Gethsemane, the second member of the Triune Godhead, the Lord Jesus Christ, offers this high priestly prayer recorded in John 17 which, by the way, is a transitional chapter in John marking the end of Jesus' earthly ministry and the beginning of his intercessory ministry for believers. Here, dear friends, we have a poignant and profound prayer just hours before his death where he intercedes on behalf of his disciples and, by extension, all who believe, including all of us, allowing all of us to eavesdrop on a face-to-face conversation that he is having with his Father. This is, frankly, an astounding and very informative privilege that we have. Can you imagine what it would have been like to be there with Jesus and hear him pray these things out loud? And yet we have the privilege of reading it here today and studying it. In this public intercession, the Lord undoubtedly wanted to awaken the spirit of prayer within them as well as within each of us and I hope that happens here today.

So because of his great love for his disciples, Jesus' ministry now moves from instruction to intercession, a lesson we would all do well to learn. We show our love, dear friends, for others not only by our instruction but also by our intercession on their behalf. It's too easy for us to spend all of our emphasis and our energy on the instruction and leave out the intercession. And here we witness the reality of what was shadowed by the high priest of Israel who was instructed by God to write the names of the sons of Israel on their ephod, which was the shoulder apron that they wore when they went into the presence of God in the Holy of Holies. They were also instructed to inscribe the names of the 12 tribes of Israel on the precious stones that were affixed to the breastpiece that covered their heart. And by doing these things, the priest would bear the burdens of the people on his shoulders as he went into the presence of God, and with their names close to his heart as a perpetual reminder of who they are and his great love for them, he would bring them into the presence of God and lay it all before the throne of grace and, of course, all of this pictured Christ and here we see the reality of this being fulfilled. Here Jesus bears the burdens and the needs of all who belong to him, and with our names engraved upon his heart, he brings us into the presence of the Father as our great high priest. As we've studied in Hebrews 7:25, "He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

Dear friends, this is what Jesus is doing in this high priestly prayer. He entrusts the safekeeping of his disciples into his Father's care as a part of a divine plan that was decreed before the world was even created. And like nowhere else in all of Scripture, we are allowed access into the Holy of Holies of inter-Trinitarian communication on the eve

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of his crucifixion. And this morning and next week, we'll just look at some of this but I'd like to focus this morning especially on the first 10 verses. Let me read them to you. John 17, beginning with verse 1.

1 Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, 2 even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. 3 This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. 4 I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. 5 Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. 6 I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. 7 Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; 8 for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. 9 I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; 10 and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them.

Well, there is so much that we can glean from this section of Scripture but I would like to focus primarily on what the Lord reveals with respect to God's plan to glorify himself through the redemption of sinful men, a plan that includes the following four characteristics. It is a plan, number 1 that is predetermined. It is a plan, secondly, that is personal. Thirdly, it's a plan that is perfect. And finally, it is a plan that is preeminent. And we'll focus on the first two this morning and my prayer, dear friends, all week has been that these truths will utterly eclipse any thought, any foolish thought of Easter eggs and baskets and bunnies and bonnets so that you will become forever captivated by the events surrounding the death, the burial, the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ and be captivated with the reality of how all of this fit precisely into God's sovereign plan of which every believer is an undeserved trophy of his grace.

I want you to notice, first, that this is a predetermined plan. Notice verse 1, it says, "Jesus spoke these things," and he's referring to those things recorded in the previous three chapters, "and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, 'Father, the hour has come.'" But what hour is this? Well, it is the climactic hour of redemptive history where the Son of God would offer himself as a sacrifice for sin; when he would conquer Satan, sin and death. Again, this is the consummation of the ages. This is when the Father would make

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him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf that we might become the righteousness of God in him. This is the hour when the Son of Man would finalize his earthly ministry in his death, in his resurrection and his ascension, even in his coronation. This is the hour, dear friends, when all of the prophecies and types and symbols of the Old Testament would find their fulfillment, when the old covenant would finally be replaced with the new. This was a predestined, predetermined plan. Peter would later preach to Israel concerning Jesus, the Nazarene, saying in Acts 2:23, "this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross." Dear friends, like every event in history, this hour was ordained by a sovereign God.

Scripture is fulfilled here. These are prophecies that are being fulfilled. For example, 700 years earlier the prophet Isaiah predicted the Savior's vicarious suffering and crucifixion. You will recall in Isaiah 53: that he would bear our griefs; he would carry our sorrows; he would be smitten of God and afflicted; he would be pierced through for our transgressions; crushed for our iniquities; that the Lord would cause the iniquity of us all to fall on him; that he would be the lamb that would not open his mouth and yet he would be led to slaughter. That was prophesied 700 years before this happened.

Move ahead 600 years before it happened, the days of Daniel in Daniel 9:25 and following. The Holy Spirit revealed to the prophet that 483 years after Artaxerxes decree to Nehemiah, that the Messiah the Prince would then be presented to the Jewish people on April 10, 30 AD and then he would be crucified.

Likewise, our Lord's triumphal entry was predicted 500 years earlier in Zechariah 9:9 where the prophet says, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly, and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey." Once again, dear friends, as we look at fulfilled prophecy, we have even more irrefutable proves that our God is sovereign over all of his creation. Nothing happens outside the purview of his will.

The prophet Isaiah said in chapter 46, verse 9, "I am God, and there is no one like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure.'" And certainly his good pleasure includes the salvation of sinners, a plan that originated with God, a plan that was made possible by the grace of God, that will be brought to completion by the power of God.

Now, notice again our text in verse 1, "Father, the hour has come; glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee." Obviously, there had been an arrangement made for mutual

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glorification in eternity past, one that must include the Son's suffering and death, but how could this bring glory to the Son and also to the Father? Well, we see the answer in verses 4 through 6. Jesus says, "I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do. Now glorify thou me together with thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world," referring to his disciples, "thine they were and thou gavest them to me and they have kept thy word."

I want you to understand, here we see the passion of the Savior's heart, the longing of his heart. It's not just that he will once again enjoy the pre-Incarnate glory that he had with the Father and with the Spirit, but he also wants to enjoy the results of what he had come to accomplish, the work that he had been sent to do, a work that had been planned from eternity. And what work was that? To seek and to save sinners who will give eternal glory to the Triune God. Dear friends, this is what occupies the heart of the Savior as he makes his way to the cross. He's praying for his work to be completed so that he can enter into the joy of all of the redeemed. Hebrews 12:2, we read of Jesus it says, "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross."

Beloved, let this sink in. As believers we are all part of a predetermined plan that will bring joy to us and, in turn, glory to God who will also rejoice. In fact, the prophet Zephaniah said this in chapter 3, verse 17, "The LORD your God is in your midst, A mighty one who will save. He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you by His love, He will exult over you with loud singing." Oh, what a wonderful Savior.

So, obviously, this speaks of a predetermined plan of mutual glorification but notice it is also, secondly, a personal plan. It is one that includes not only the divine persons of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit as we will see, but also specific individuals.

Notice how he describes his disciples and by extension all who belong to him. Verse 2, "even as You gave Him," he's referring to himself, "authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life." So there are certain ones that the Father has given to him. Verse 6, "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word." Verse 9, "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me," referring to all believers, "for they are Yours." Look at verse 24, "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."

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So, dear friends, we see this plan pertains to all whom the Father had given him. Here the very heart of the Lord Jesus is revealed as he pleads for those that the Father had given him, those that the Father had created. He is burdened about this predetermined hour, this time of mutual glorification of the Father and the Son, and this plan that includes these specific individuals. Folks, this is so exceedingly precious to me. I hope it is to you.

Let me try to tell you what is really going on here and here we have to have an understanding of Scripture to see how it all plays out, but he's saying that in eternity past, the Father ordained a plan to demonstrate his infinite love to his Son whereby he chose for his Son a bride made up of undeserved sinners, undeserving sinners that he would save and transform by his grace. He chose them by name. He recorded them in a book of life. These would be the names of the Son's bride, an elect group of redeemed humanity pledged to him as a gift of the Father's love, a pledge that is sealed by the Holy Spirit. And as we look at Scripture, we see that the Father would then intentionally draw these people unto himself, this great company of sinners, through the convicting and regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. And as these people would come to the Father, they would worship the Father who chose them and drew them; they would worship the Spirit who convicted them and transformed them; and they would worship the Son who purchased their redemption. And central to this whole predetermined plan of inter-Trinitarian love and glory was the death of the Son. He had to be the perfect substitute for sinners in order for them to be reconciled to a holy God. These are the ones to which Jesus refers as "those whom thou hast given me." Oh, what a beautiful picture of our betrothal to the Son.

Dear friends, this is how the Son received his bride. We're familiar with this. In a wedding, we see how a father will walk his beautiful bride down the aisle. I've seen it happen many times. And the pastor will say, "Who gives this woman to be married to this man?" and the Father says, "I do." Then he takes her hand and hands her over to the bridegroom and, folks, this is what is happening here with the Father and his Son and the bride. "Who gives this sinner to be married to this Savior?" and the Father says, "I do." Oh, child of God, I want you to see how these are the very things that weighs heavy on the heart of our Savior as he prepares to make atonement for his bride. He's not thinking about himself, he's thinking about us.

Notice in verse 3, it's as though he's saying, "I'm about to die so that they might have eternal life," and he said, "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." In other words, he's pleading with the Father, "O Father, help them to know you. Help them to know me." It's the great burden of my heart to know that I have family members and I have friends who do not know God. There is no greater evidence of genuine saving faith than to see a person who knows God. Many

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people know about God, but they do not know him intimately, personally. They do not have sweet communion with him. This is what Jesus is interceding on our behalf that we might do, that we might know him.

Also, notice as well in verses 6 through 8, he says, "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me." He's saying, "Father, I have given them your revelation of yourself and of the Triune Godhead so, Father, help them to see that they are indeed your possession by creation and by redemption. Help them to see that they are not their own, that they have been bought with a price, that they belong to you, not to themselves. And help them to see how I will purchase their redemption and the penalty and the power and one day the presence of sin. Give them the assurance of your eternal love. Give them the assurance of your preservation in the dark days that are going to come. Preserve them in your love and help them to be obedient to you with heartfelt allegiance to your word, the word that I have taught them." This is the passion of the Savior's heart as he intercedes on our behalf. Do you realize he's praying that today for each of us?

In verse 11, he brings this precious love gift before his Father and he pleads with him concerning their eternal security and their unity in the face of the world's temptations saying, "Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are." Help them to see the reality of all that you are that is encompassed in your name.

Likewise in verse 13 he's saying in essence, "Give them joy in the midst of sorrow." He says, "But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world." In other words, "I'm speaking these things out loud so they can hear me, so it can be recorded, so millions of others can hear this." Why? "So that they may have My joy made full in themselves." Folks, this is amazing. Here's what he's saying, "I'm letting everyone hear this prayer so they might know not only that they belong to the Father and that they are a love gift to me, the Son, but also so that they will hear this intercession." Why? "So that they may have my joy made full in themselves."

Dear Christian, I trust you will be encouraged with this. Do you realize that it was the passion of the Savior's heart on the eve of his crucifixion for us to experience this same kind of joy that he had? And he prays that for us right now, that we might experience the same joy that he experiences with the Father. What astounding love this is. He's facing the cross and he's concerned about our joy, a joy that he, himself, is fully aware of. In

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John 15:11 we read, "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." Isn't it amazing to know that God is so intimately concerned about our joy? And how is that joy made possible? There in John 15, the previous verse answers that. Jesus says in essence, "Abide in my love by keeping My commandments, even as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." In other words, obedience to the will of the Father is the basis of our joy. Share his obedience, you will share his joy.

Folks, this is the great passion of the Savior for each of us. This is a priority in his prayer life and in his ongoing intercession on our behalf. In fact, in John 16:24 Jesus says, "Ask and you will receive, that your joy may be full." In other words, "Pray for those things that are consistent with the word and the will and the purposes of God in your life and he will pour out his blessings upon you and you will have joy come what may." Folks, if you know nothing of that kind of soul-satisfying, soul-exhilarating joy and serenity in your life even in the midst of trials, here's why: you're not abiding in the love of Christ by keeping his commandments. You're out of fellowship with him. You're living outside the will of God, living for yourself, not living for him.

So, again, Jesus is praying for a plan that is predetermined and it is personal demonstrating his infinite love for his bride. Again, child of God, be humbled, be exhilarated by this truth. Think about this: through no merit of our own in eternity past we were chosen by name to be part of the bride of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's utterly staggering to me to think that our life in eternity were ordained by a sovereign God to fit perfectly into this predetermined plan, that somehow we are a part of a love gift from the Father to the Son. Paul speaks of this in 2 Timothy 1:9. He talks about God "who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity." Can there be a more humbling truth than this? God the Father promised the Son a tangible expression of his infinite love, that is, a bridal church will one day, according to Revelation 19:7, "give glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." To think that he chose us by name and put those names in the Lamb's book of life from the foundation of the world, Revelation 13:8.

And eventually those chosen ones are born in sin, they are at enmity with God, unfit to be part of this holy bride, so consistent with that predetermined plan, the Father in his infinite love compels sinners to come to his Son by his irresistible grace. Jesus described this in John 6:37, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." In verse 39, "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." And he went on to add in verse 44, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me

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draws him." Helkoo in the original language, it means "to drag off"; it means "to irresistibly compel." And if the Father had not done that, we would never come to him. It doesn't mean that he drags us kicking and screaming, but rather he changes our hearts so that willingly and joyfully and desperately we come to saving faith in Christ. Nothing else in life matters. It's like a man that is dying of thirst suddenly being offered fresh water. We willingly drink in all that the Lord has given us and it's the Father who causes that to happen by the power of the Spirit. The redeemed are those who were born not of the will of man but of God, John 1:13. And Paul reminds us in Romans 9:16 that salvation "does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy."

But, folks, the Father's drawing of sinners unto himself, bringing that bride to the Son for salvation would be utterly meaningless had the Son not purchased our redemption. This, of course, he did as part of that predetermined plan. Remember what Paul said in Ephesians 5:25, "Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless." How amazing to know that we have been chosen by the Father as a gift to the Son and to think that he orchestrated our conception even in our mother's womb. He superintended our development and our birth. Psalm 139, "Thou didst form my inward parts. Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb." He goes on to say, "Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance." Moreover, we learn that he ordained even the length of our life. He went on to say in verse 16, "In thy book they were all written, the days that were ordained for me when as yet there was not one of them."

Think of it, dear friends, before you were even born, your Creator knew everything about you. He even knew that you would rebel against him, you would violate his law, you would reject him and despite all of this because of his predetermined plan of personal redemption, he drew you unto himself and saved you to give you to his Son. Paul said that God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Dear friend, if you have trusted Christ as Savior, please understand that you are not some insignificant number that is part of some vast impersonal plan of redemption. The Bible knows nothing of that but instead the Triune God is intimately, personally, powerfully, intentionally, compassionately involved in your life. We read in 2 Peter 1:4 that we have become a partaker of the divine nature. In John 14:23, we learn that the Triune Godhead dwells within us. In Galatians 2:20 Paul said, "it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives

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# Our Lord's Prayer of Intercession Pt. 1

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 17:1-10  
**Preached on:** Sunday, April 9, 2017

in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who," catch this, "loved me," personally, "and delivered Himself up for me," personally.

This is amazing to me, to think that God in his sovereign and perfect love determined that Jesus Christ would bear my sin personally in his body on the cross. Jesus said in John 10:14, "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own." Verse 15 he says, "I lay down My life for the sheep." You see, friends, this means that Jesus didn't come just to die but to die for you and me specifically, personally. As a man, he became our substitute, a specific act of substitution. Jesus knew specifically those whom the Father had given him in eternity past. He knew he was going to bear the sins of his bridal church. It's interesting, if you ask the average Christian, "For whom did Christ die?" they will say, "Well, for everybody. For the whole world." "Okay, so what you're saying is Jesus paid the debt of sin for everyone when he died on the cross of Calvary?" "Well, yes." "So therefore at the cross his sacrifice was for no one in particular but everyone in general?" "Well, yeah." "So in other words, his atonement was not an actual atonement, it was a potential atonement?" Well, now it starts to get a little sticky, doesn't it? "What you're saying, therefore, is he bore the wrath that was deserved for no one in particular but everyone in general? So if God's wrath was satisfied on behalf of all people, I guess all people go to heaven, right?" Well, the universalist would say, "Yes." But we know biblically that not all people go to heaven, some go to hell.

So if Christ died for everyone, that means that hell is full of people whose sins were paid for on the cross. This would mean his death was merely an act whereby he accomplished a potential salvation, not an actual one. And many will agree, he died for everyone potentially and it is up to you to accept that gift. Jesus died, therefore, for everyone indiscriminately so that everyone in the world in principle is forgiven. So that means that the only ones who will be saved are those who by their own efforts actualize this potential atonement. Said differently, the actualizing of the atonement is up to man, not to God, and if the sinner chooses never to believe in Christ, the atoning work of Christ remains an unrealized potential. Many people believe that. Many believe in an atonement that is unlimited in scope but is, therefore, limited in its power, in its effect, because it is at the mercy of the will of the sinner.

There is a big problem here. How can a spiritually dead sinner make that choice without being born again by the power of the Spirit? I think as we look at this, and there are many other passages, but I believe the Bible teaches just the opposite and we see it manifested even here in the Lord's prayer. I believe that the atonement is limited in its scope, that he died for the elect, but it is unlimited in its power, it is able to save to the uttermost. The atonement was not a potential salvation for everyone indiscriminately, everyone in general, it was an actual salvation for those whom God appointed unto salvation.

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Beloved, don't miss this: Christ Jesus bore your sins and my sins in his body. When he went to the cross, he knew each of us intimately. He knew us before we were created. Scripture is clear he set his love upon those that he chose in eternity past. He knew us intimately, he even knew our sins, so dear friends, what happened at the cross is deeply personal. His atoning work was not universal and indiscriminate, Jesus came to save all whom the Father had given him before the foundation of the world and this is the heart of Jesus' prayer in John 17. Jesus had no thought of going to the cross and dying some vague general death for no one in particular. He went with us on his mind and on his heart. He died for you and me and we died in him and rose in him purely by the majestic sovereign love that God determined to place upon us. So, friends, never think about the cross in vague terms. It was a real substitution, not a potential one, not a vague one. Our atonement is a real atonement, not a potential one that we happened to activate, unlike those in hell who for whatever reason were not as wise or clever. His atonement was a specific act of substitution for specific individuals. He came to do his Father's will and that was to purchase the redemption of all whom the Father had given him. His plan was predetermined and it was personal.

You will remember in Hebrews 9 at the end of verse 15 when we were studying there, the writer says that "those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance." You see, the very purpose of the atonement was to unite those who had been called into union with Christ in his death. In fact, the nature of the new covenant described in Hebrews 8 is for all those who "know God," all those who have his law written upon their heart. Those are the called ones. So there is no one in the new covenant who is not a part of the called, of the elect, and this is so important because our Mediator who is Christ, only mediates what his death provides. Moreover, his atoning work was never something dependent upon some decision that you might make or that I might make, but rather it was dependent upon God's sovereign love determined in eternity past to love you and to love me specifically, particularly, and to send his Son to die on our behalf specifically as part of that bridal love gift to his Son.

So as we approach Resurrection Sunday, let's remember Jesus' passionate intercession on our behalf and we've just begun to scratch the surface of it a bit here but let's remember that God has a precise, a predetermined plan to glorify himself through the redemption of specific sinners that he set his love upon in eternity past and chose to be a part of the love gift to his Son. It makes Easter eggs, baskets, bunnies and bonnets look incredibly stupid, doesn't it?

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Dear friend, if you've never placed your faith in Christ, if you've never asked him to save you from your sin, won't you do that today before it's too late, while there is still time? Trust in Christ as your Savior. Believe in him and you will be saved. And for those of you who know Christ but maybe you're hurting, maybe you're tormented because of some issue in your life, some great trial, perhaps you're even tempted to feel as though the Lord has deserted you, won't you find refuge in Christ's high priestly work on your behalf as he intercedes for you even today, pleading with the Father to help you see that you are his possession, you are not your own? Don't be living for yourself, live for him. Praying that you will understand how you forever belong to him, praying that he will protect and preserve you come what may, that you will never doubt his love for you, praying that you will know him, know the power of his resurrection in your life so that you can have joy even in sorrow, praying that you will be obedient because obedience abiding in Christ is the basis for enjoying the love that he longs and the blessing that he longs to lavish upon you. Just remember that today those of you that are hurting. Jesus is interceding for you right now as your great high priest.

Let's pray together.

*Father, thank you for these eternal truths. They are so far beyond us. There are so many things that we will never understand because you have not given us your mind but you have given us a heart of faith and you have given us your word and we rejoice in your Holy Spirit that helps us to understand and helps us to apply all that you have taught us and continue to teach us. So I pray that you will take these great truths and help them to find the lodging in our heart, help them to germinate as great seeds of blessing and produce great fruit for our good and for your glory. For it is in Christ's name that I pray. Amen.*

We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You've been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at [otcr.org](http://otcr.org).

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