

Jesus' High Priestly Prayer

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 17:1-5
Preached on: Sunday, June 21, 2015

Will you join me this morning by taking your Bibles, turning to John's Gospel, chapter 17. We begin our examination of perhaps one of the most remarkable passages in all of Scripture as we see the Lord Jesus Christ, our great high priest, drawing aside the veil and taking us into the Holy of Holies of the Most High God through his prayer to his Father. This is rightly described as Jesus' high priestly prayer because like the high priest of the Old Testament who would enter into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement to atone for the sins of the people, Jesus is now preparing to present himself as that very sacrifice.

You will recall the context. Jesus has been in the Upper Room with his disciples on the night before his betrayal and, actually the night of his betrayal, the night before his crucifixion, he has been ministering to and comforting his disciples. He has encouraged them, exhorted them and then instructed them and now he goes from preaching to prayer. He follows up his encouraging exhortation and instruction with intercession. This, by the way, is a great example for us to follow. We must do more than just encourage people when we disciple them. We must do more than just instruct them, as important as that is. We must also take them before the throne of grace in intercessory prayer, pleading with God to do his great work in their life. John Calvin said, quote, "Doctrine has no power unless efficacy is imparted to it from above." He went on to say, "Christ holds out an example here to teach them not to employ themselves only in sowing the word but by mingling prayers with it to implore the assistance of God that his blessing may render their labors fruitful."

It is fascinating as we look at this prayer that Jesus prays audibly so that his disciples can hear it and so that it can be recorded for we his disciples to understand what he is saying. He wants them and he wants us to hear his intimate, passionate intercession with the Father. Now, he knew that they wouldn't fully understand all that he was saying until after his death and his resurrection and the Holy Spirit would come upon them but certainly this prayer was given for their comfort, for their encouragement as well as ours. He wanted to strengthen their faith knowing all of the troubles they were about to endure in the days ahead. In fact in verse 13, we read, "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."

Now, in a moment, we're going to examine closely the first five verses but before I read them and we look at them, I want to remind you that what we witness here with the Lord Jesus Christ in his intercessory work on behalf of himself and his 11 disciples as well as all disciples down through the ages, is really a picture of what the Old Testament high priest would do. We can see this clearly when we compare the work of the Old Testament

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high priest with what Jesus did here. For example, if we were to go back to Leviticus 16, we read how God gave detailed instructions concerning the high priest and how he should consecrate himself before he entered the holy place inside the veil on the Day of Atonement. There were great preparations that had to be made before he could go before the mercy seat which was on the Ark of the Covenant. Careful instructions that had to be obeyed perfectly lest he die. Now this would include various ceremonial cleansings. It would include wearing certain prescribed garments and certainly making certain kinds of specific sacrifices and none of these were necessary, of course, for the sinless Son of God because all of these preparations were made in his life, nevertheless they were made.

Not only was it important for him, the Old Testament priest, to consecrate himself in the way God prescribed but he also had to make a sin offering for his household, for his family before he could come into the presence of a holy God. Then, after that, after he consecrated himself, his immediate family, then he was able to bring the whole congregation of Israel into the presence of God to make atonement for their sin. This is precisely what we see happening here in John 17. After perfectly consecrating himself through his life, our great high priest, the Lord Jesus, brings himself into the presence of his Father's holiness and then, as we will see, he will bring in his immediate family represented by his 11 disciples. Then finally he will bring in all of the redeemed throughout the ages to come.

Another similarity can be seen in that the Old Testament high priest had to be profoundly aware of his own weakness and his own dependency upon the Father. All self-sufficiency had to be jettisoned. He had to be totally dependent upon God to perform the work that was before him and, even so, here we see the Lord Jesus Christ who within an hour or so will be in the garden of Gethsemane sweating great drops of blood and he has previously told his disciples in chapter 13 that his own Spirit was deeply troubled. So aware of his own need for the Father's help, he comes to him and he prays for the Father to glorify him now that the hour of his torture and death had come. Moreover, like the high priest of old who shared the great burdens of the people they represented, so too Jesus shared in our humanity. It's for this reason that the writer of Hebrews tells us that, "we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin."

We also see, for example in Exodus 28:3 and following, how the Lord instructed Moses to "speak to all the skillful persons whom I have endowed with the spirit of wisdom, that they make Aaron's garments," Aaron was the high priest at that time, "make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister as priest to Me. These are the garments which they shall make: a breastpiece and an ephod and a robe and a tunic of checkered work, a turban and a sash," and he went on to describe the magnificent colors that were to

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be a part of these garments, garments designed to exalt the office and the function of the priesthood, all of which vividly portrayed their mediatorial role before the Lord God as they represented a sinful people in need of mercy, before a God who would graciously give it to them based upon a sacrifice. A sacrifice that would ultimately point to the ultimate sacrifice, the Lamb of God.

But we also read there in Exodus 28 that on the two shoulder pieces that were joined to the ephod which was basically an apron type of a thing, verse 9, he says, "You shall take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, six of their names on the one stone and the names of the remaining six on the other stone, according to their birth." He goes on to say, "you shall set them in filigree settings of gold." Filigree is the very delicate ornamental artwork of scrolls and arabesques that you see skilled jewelers doing with gold and so forth. Then he says, "You shall put the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, as stones of memorial for the sons of Israel, and Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD on his two shoulders for a memorial."

Moreover we read in verses 15 through 29 of Exodus 28 that God gave detailed instructions for a magnificent breastpiece of judgment that the priest was to wear. This was a square piece of beautiful material folded in half and open at the top like a pouch and then placed over the front of the ephod and it was adorned with 12 precious stones in four rows on which were engraved the names of the 12 tribes of Israel. In verse 29 God says, "Aaron shall carry the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgment over his heart when he enters the holy place, for a memorial before the LORD continually."

Oh, child of God, don't you see the similarities here in what the Lord Jesus is doing here in his high priestly work? On his shoulders he is bearing the sins and the burdens of all of his people as he comes in behind the veil to make atonement for their sins. He is carrying us into the presence of God as he brings us before the throne of grace so that we can find help in a time of need. And like the high priest of the old covenant, he bears the names of his covenant people over his heart, a memorial of the judgment that we all deserve yet the forgiveness that we will all receive because of the atoning work. It's amazing to think that that very night Jesus had the names of all whom the Father had given him engraved upon his heart. Here he is taking each one of us, as it were, with all of our guilt, with all of our shame, all of us whom he had loved in eternity past before we were ever even created. He is taking us before the mercy seat where he, himself, will shed his blood as an atonement for our sin and there he will be our substitute. There he will satisfy the just wrath of God because we have broken his law. It's for this reason that Jude burst forth with that great benediction in Jude 24 where it summarizes all of this so perfectly. He says, "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of

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His glory blameless with great joy." It is he, the one that can do that. He goes on to say, "to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever."

Now, it's important for you to understand that Jesus' high priestly role that is pictured here where he bears our burdens upon his shoulders, where he has our names forever engrafted upon his heart, it is a role that he continues to play this very day. Do you realize that he continues to bring us into the presence of God? You see, the reason he is able to save us to the uttermost is because he ever lives to make intercession for us. Hebrews 7:25, the writer says, "He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." He not only was but he is our great high priest. We go on to read in verse 27 or Hebrews 7, He "does not need daily, like those high priests," of old, "to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself."

Oh, child of God, what a marvelous blessing this is. What an amazing thing to consider that he always lives to make intercession for us. I cannot even begin to think of the many ways that he has prayed on my behalf, the ways he has prayed on your behalf. I don't know if you've ever considered this. I think of his intercession on behalf of Peter. Do you remember in Luke 22, the Lord Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat but I have prayed for you that your faith might not fail." I'm sure he has prayed the same for me many, many times. Beloved, since we are to be like Christ, may I ask you as we pause for just a moment: whose names are near to your heart? So near to you that you are faithful to bring them before the throne of grace and plead with God on their behalf? I pray that the list is long. I pray that it begins with you and with your family: with your children, with your wife, your husband, your loved ones and with your friends.

Well, with this background, let's look closely at these first five verses. He wants us to see so many things here. I feel so inadequate to even begin to deal with these things but by the help of the Spirit I will endeavor to do so. I want to focus on three things and, again, there are many more but at least three things that I believe the Lord is passionate about here. He wants us to see his great passion, first of all, for his former glory. Secondly, for his Father's glory. Finally, for eternal life for those whom the Father had given him. Let me read the text to you beginning in verse 1 of John 17.

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

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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."

Well, you notice a very important truth that emerges from this text: notice that what is about to happen is not plan B, it's plan A. It was all part of God's sovereign plan of redemption to bring glory to himself therefore we can say three things about this plan. First of all, it was a predetermined plan. Notice he says, "Father, the hour has come." Now, this is not only the hour of his sacrificial death but the consummation of his earthly ministry so it would include his death, his burial, his resurrection, his ascension, his coronation in glory. Now you will recall that on several occasions before he has said, "My hour has not yet come." Ah, but now it has come because it is a predetermined hour and that predetermined time has arrived.

But secondly, it was also a personal plan. Notice he prays that he might give eternal life "to all whom You have given to Me." You see, he was about to lay down his life for his sheep and he knew precisely, he knew exactly who his bride would be, those who the Father had predetermined to redeem and give to his Son. Therefore, my friends, we can say that this is going to be an actual atonement, not some potential atonement. You hear so many times people saying that Christ died for the whole world, for the sins of the whole world but in reality, he died for the sins of the elect. That's what we see here. You see, this is a real substitution. It's not some potential substitution that is, shall we say, available to everybody so that all you have to do is activate that atonement by the will of man. This is all part of God's sovereign plan. It is a personal plan. It is a real substitution. When he died on the cross, he knew precisely for whom he was dying. He knew you. He knew me. He knew our sins. This is one of the most profound truths in all of Scripture to me. You see, his atonement was limited in extent but it was unlimited in power, indeed, he would save all who had been appointed unto salvation.

So it was a predetermined plan, a personal plan, thirdly, it was a perfect plan. Notice verse 4, "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do." Now here we have a reminder that God is sovereign over all things. He not only knows the end from the beginning, he has ordained it. It's for this reason that Paul tells us in Ephesians 1:11 that he has predestined all things according to his purpose and works. He works all things after the counsel of his will.

So now he is ready to complete this final step in his sovereign plan of redemption. Notice verse 1, "Jesus spoke these things," referring to his farewell discourse recorded in the three preceding chapters, he spoke these things "and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He

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said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You.'" Can't you see it in your mind's eye, dear friend? He gazes into the transcendent otherness of heaven and he looks beyond this fallen planet. He looks beyond all of the wickedness here on earth and he sets his eyes and his mind on his eternal home. Don't you know that he could see his Father sitting there? Don't you know he could see the angelic beings and the redeemed from ages past there around the throne and all of that glory? I'm sure you, like me, have been in some place where you missed home. I know what it's like to be in some remote place like Siberia or Africa and you look up into the heavens and you say, "O Lord, my, how I would long to be at home right now but beyond my home in Tennessee with my family, how I would long to be with you."

That's what's going on here. It reminds me of what David said in Psalm 25:1, "O to Thee, O Lord, I lift up my soul." You see, every honest believer will admit that we have no refuge here on earth. Our only hope, our only help is in Christ and in Psalm 123:1, the Psalmist expressed his great confidence in God when he said, "To Thee I lift up my eyes. O Thou who art enthroned in the heavens." This is what's happening here with the Lord Jesus. With utmost veneration and confidence, he yearns to see his Father and to see him glorified so he says, "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You." So here, dear friends, number 1: we see his first priority in this prayer is for his former glory. "Glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You."

It's important for us to remember that the term "glory" is a term that is filled with mystery and wonder. In fact, the Old Testament term in the Hebrew is one that is rooted in a term that means heavy or weighty and it was used figuratively to describe someone who was weighed down with an abundance of wealth, possessions that would give testimony to their honor, to their worth, to their prominence. To be sure, we see the weight of God and the glory of his creation as we look at the splendor of his creation but we've also seen it in the weight of his divine judgment. We've seen it in his power. In fact, in the Old Testament, the glory of God is always related to the Lord's self-revelation. For example, in the burning bush where Moses came and he sought and there the Lord revealed his holiness to him among other things. And you will recall in Exodus 33, Moses begged God to show him his glory. "Just give me a glimpse of your glory. I want to see it." But God would not allow him to see his face lest he die and so you will recall how that God put him in the cleft of the rock and covered him with his hand and then he said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you." Hm, there we see that the goodness of God and his name are somehow all associated with his glory. Then he went on to say, "and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."

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There we learn that the glory of God is the revelation of his character. You see, his very name contains the essence of all of his attributes and even in the blinding light of his holiness, we see the outshining of his grace and his mercy and his compassion and love. My friends, if you want to see the glory of God today, all you need to do is look upon the Lord Jesus and there you will see his character in full display. In fact, Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 4:6 that we see "the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." And the writer of Hebrews tells us that Christ is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his nature. Likewise in the Old Testament, sometimes we would see the glory of God concealed in dark and ominous clouds and then sometimes in the dazzling light of his Shekinah that would fill the tabernacle and later the temple. There the people would see the ineffable light of his presence being manifested among them, a tangible, visible testimony to his majesty and his beauty and his power. And you will recall in Ezekiel's prophecy we read the history of how the Shekinah glory went up from the Holy of Holies in the temple and God left the temple. His presence departed because of their sin and it went out over the Mount of Olives and it disappeared and for 400 years they did not see the glory of God until a star, aster in the original language which we translate star, shone forth and brought the kingmakers over the place where the baby Jesus lay and there the Light of the World came. It is for this reason that John says, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father full of grace and truth." There the Lord Jesus came into the world as the Light of the World and John tells us that "in Him was life and the life was the light of men and the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it."

So dear friends, here in his prayer Jesus is asking the Father to restore him to his former glory, the glory that he had shared with the Father from all eternity. Verse 5, "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." It is worthy to note that in both Isaiah 42 and in Isaiah 48, we see the Lord saying something very important. He says, "I will not give My glory to another." Yet here in John 17:5 we see Jesus stating that he has shared the glory of the Father from before the world was. My friends, can there be a clearer expression of the deity of Christ in all of Scripture? What a devastating blow this is to the cults that deny the deity of Christ and what a marvelous thing it is to consider that Jesus shared the glory of the Father in eternity past. If you want to read about the glory of Jesus before he came, go to Isaiah 6 and there you have a picture of the pre-Incarnate Christ. Jesus is there sitting on a throne. He is lofty and exalted with the train of his robe filling the temple. There we read how the seraphim hover around him to do his bidding and yet they cover their face in the presence of his glory. And they call out to one another, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts. The whole earth is full of His glory." My friends, this is the one that came on our behalf and

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how astonishing to think that here in John 17 he is interceding on our behalf as he prepares to die as our substitute.

You might ask, "But what happened to Jesus' glory when he came to earth? Did he lose it?" No, dear friends, he concealed it. He veiled it by his human flesh. It's for this reason that Wesley was right in his great Christmas hymn, "Hark the Herald Angels Sing," when he said,

"Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail the Incarnate Deity.
Pleased with us in flesh to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel."

"Yes, but why did he veil his glory?" Ah, because sinful man could not look upon it and live, that's why. "Yes, but John says we beheld his glory, how so?" In his character. In his works, especially his work on the cross. Dear friends, sometimes as believers we can fail to consider these things and we can often just think of Jesus as the little infant in the manger as indeed he was. And we can see him as a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. Or we see him hanging on that terrible tree in agony. But do we consider the eternal, inexpressible glory of Jesus that was just beneath the veil of his flesh? Certainly the world did not see it then nor do they see it now. We can't see the fullness of his glory now but we will and I believe very soon. However, Matthew tells us that the Lord Jesus mysteriously peeled back his flesh in some way that we don't understand and a portion of the effulgence of his glory burst forth. Matthew says he was transfigured before them, referring to Peter, James and John. And his face shone like the sun and his garments became as white as light. Then later on we read, "Behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them and behold a voice out of the cloud saying, 'This is My beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him.' And when the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were much afraid."

I marvel to think that in just a few minutes literally from the time Jesus makes this prayer, he will go into the garden of Gethsemane. He has already told his disciples that his soul is deeply grieved to the point of death and within an hour or so he is going to sweat great drops of blood. Then a Roman cohort is going to come. A cohort is about 3-600 men along with the officers from the chief priest and the Pharisees. The word of God says that they came with lanterns and torches and weapons to arrest him. And you will recall when they come he says to them, "Whom do you seek?" And they say, "Jesus of Nazareth." And then he responds with the covenant name of God, that name that encompasses the full sum of all of his glorious attributes and he says, "I am He." And you will recall that when they heard his name, the text says they drew back and fell to the ground. Oh, child

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of God, don't you see it? Hidden behind that human flesh that was on the verge of death was the eternal glory of the Lord of Hosts and by just speaking his name, he released a miniscule portion of his glory that was so powerful as to cause men to fall to the ground. No wonder he would say in verse 5, "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was."

So Jesus begins his prayer, "Father, the hour has come," verse 1, "glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You." Jesus knew that by the Father glorifying him on the cross and in his resurrection he would be able to in turn glorify the Father. So secondly we see: Jesus' passion for the glory of his Father. Now, we've got to ask a very important question and answer it: in what way did Jesus' death bring glory to himself, much less to his Father? Who can possibly look at that ghastly scene of Jesus hanging on the cross where his visage was so marred that you couldn't even tell he was human, the word of God tells us. And how could the Father glorify his Son in such a thing? And where is the glory in wearing a crown of thorns and suffering in such an agonizing way, that death of crucifixion? And how could any of this possibly bring glory to the Father who actually sent his Son who voluntarily died such an ignominious and painful death? Where's the glory in all of this?

Oh, dear friends, don't you see it? Jesus' death on the cross would complete the work that the Father had sent him to do and that is to give eternal life to all whom the Father had given him. Eternal life to all of the men and women and boys and girls whose names were written in the Lamb's book of life in eternity past. People from every nation and tribe and tongue and people. All who would eventually then give glory to the Father forever. Give glory to the Son. Give glory to the Spirit forever. Therefore in verse 4 he says, "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." Help me, Father, complete that saving work that you sent me to accomplish, that the redeemed throughout the ages will ultimately give glory to you forever.

Notice verse 2, he says, "even as You gave Him," he's referring to himself there, "authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life." You see, what he's saying here is that the Father gave the Son authority over all mankind to grant eternal life to those whom the Father had given him and to judge the wicked because he has authority, you will recall, to judge as well as to grant eternal life. And Jesus knew that after he accomplished this work he would be exalted once again to his former glory and from the right hand of the Father, he would be able to exercise fully the authority that the Father had given him. So he is reflecting upon that time when suddenly the glory that had been veiled would suddenly be unveiled.

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We see a very different Jesus in the book of Revelation than we do in the Gospels, don't we? The book of Revelation, the Apocalupsis Yesu Christu which means the unveiling or the revealing of Jesus Christ and there we do not see him in his humiliation but in his glorification. In fact, in describing the Holy of Holies in heaven, the New Jerusalem in which we will one day dwell, John says at the end of Revelation, "I saw no temple in it for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple." And I love this next phrase, "and the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it for the glory of God has illumined it and its lamp is the Lamb." Beloved, the Light of the World will also be the light of heaven.

This is what Jesus longs for. Not only for his former glory but for the glory of the Father and this is what he anticipates in his prayer but he knows that without the cross, none of this would ever happen. The whole purpose of bearing our sins in his body is to give us eternal life and what happens when we are given eternal life? We become new creatures. We are gradually transformed into the image of Christ and we give glory to God forever. This is one way the Father is glorified on the cross, verse 3, "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God." but the Father was also glorified on the cross in another way and it's this: you see, dear friends, on the cross the whole universe is able to see the holiness and the majesty and the beauty of his glorious character because even as God showed his glory to Moses by allowing his goodness to pass before him so that he could understand his name and proclaim his name, even so that's what the cross does because on the cross we see the goodness of God and therein is his glory. We see majesty, the majesty of God there. We see justice being united with mercy. It was there on that cross that his goodness and grace and his holiness and his righteousness and his unfathomable love all comes together. All of it is dramatically displayed on the cross. Of course, fallen eyes cannot see this. They did not see it then. They do not see it now. But the eyes of faith can see it and by God's grace we can look upon that cross and find glory in it, can't we? That's what we just sung about.

So the Lord Jesus now prays so fervently for this but not only do we see his passion for his former glory and his Father's glory but finally, for eternal life for those whom the Father had given him. Now let's think about this for a moment. What is eternal life? You know, when you think of eternity, you know how your brain kind of, I don't know, just kind of blows up? It comes to a point where it's like it does not compute and the computer screen goes blank. And many times when we think of eternal life, we think of that uninterrupted perpetual living in a perfect environment where there is no sin and no effects of the sin. You know, it certainly includes that but, oh, dear beloved Christian, it's so much more than that and I hope I can communicate this to you. It's so much more than what we can imagine in our feeble mind, in our fallen mind. As we look at the word of

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God, especially in this text as you are going to see, eternal life is the everlasting and euphoric state of living in intimate fellowship with God and delighting in him forever. It is knowing God.

Often as believers we talk about the joy of everlasting life without any thought of finally being able to know God in fellowship with him but Jesus says in verse 3, "This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." You see, my friends, eternal life is far more than being united to our departed loved ones and somehow enjoying that kind of reunion. It's far more than enjoying perfect health as wonderful as that will be, and not having anymore tears in a perfect environment. But the supreme blessing of eternal life is having an intimate knowledge of the one true God in all of his glory and being able to enjoy and worship him forever. In Romans 5, Paul is talking about the great blessings and benefits of our justification and in verse 2 he says that through Christ "we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand." In other words, he has forever established or fixed a position of grace for us in which to stand because we have been declared righteous. Then he says this, "and we exult in hope of the glory of God." In other words, we are rejoicing over the fact that some day we are going to have unrestricted personal fellowship with the Triune God because we have been declared righteous. In 1 Corinthians 13:12, he says, "Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known." The term "know" in the original language here is one that means "to become thoroughly acquainted with; intimately aware of."

You see, this side of heaven, even with Scriptures and the illuminating work of the Spirit, we cannot fully see the face of God. As Paul is saying, you know, it's like an imperfect reflection that can be seen in those polished metal mirrors they had in ancient days and so he says, "Now we only know in part," basically through the word of God, "but one day," to whatever extent God will allow us, he tells us that "we will know Him fully." We will know him just as he fully and intimately knows us, the one that has created us, the one who has saved us, the one that dwells within us. Imagine this: not only will we see the glory of God face to face but we shall have the same kind of intimate understanding of his person as he has with us and he knows me far better than I know myself and so I can't even imagine what it will be like. Then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known. Of course, because we will be transformed into the image of Christ, we can understand more of what Paul said, "to exult and hope of the glory of God," means to rejoice in the great certainty that one day we will experience some measure of being in the likeness of God, whatever that will be. Paul tells us in Romans 8:29, "whom He foreknew," or literally fore-loved, "He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son." So God has predestined believers to become like Christ so that we can share in the likeness of his glory, the glory of his character and in some measure the glory

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Jesus' High Priestly Prayer

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of his power and in some measure the glory of his makeup and even his external appearance. So Paul would say in 2 Corinthians 3:18, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."

So, folks, back to Jesus' prayer: in the midst of his own personal anguish, he's coming to the Father and with great urgency he is praying that all whom the Father has given him will be given eternal life which means to know God. To enjoy everlasting communion with the Triune God. My friends, this should be the passion of our heart. As I meditated upon this, I was reminded that I had grandchildren that do not know God. I have family members that do not know God. I've got friends that do not know God. Some of you do not know God. You are alienated from him. You are separated from him because of sin therefore you have no spiritual life and when you look at people that do not know God, there is nothing about their life that even remotely resembles the Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing about them that indicates that they have an intimate knowledge of who God is. They have no fellowship with the living God. It is for this reason that Jesus says in verse 25, "O righteous Father, the world has not known Thee." I pray, dear friends, that this will burden you as much as it did Jesus. He's about to give his life in a way that we cannot imagine and yet the urgent passion of his heart is that we might have eternal life, that we might know God. If this was so urgent for him, should it not be for us?

So Jesus longs for the glorious triumph of his salvation that he is about to accomplish on the cross. He is longing for his ascension back into heaven. I'm sure he's thinking about how the angelic host will receive him, the redeemed throughout the ages. He's longing for that moment when the veil of his flesh will be forever jettisoned and he will sit down at the right hand of the Father and enjoy the fullness of his former glory once again and exercise his authority to give eternal life and to judge the wicked. He's longing for that moment when the angelic host and the redeemed will gather around the throne, praising the Father, the Holy Spirit and the Lamb that was slain.

In closing, folks, do you know how we see his glory today? In those that he has saved by his grace. Look at verse 10, "I have been glorified in them." Verse 20, "and the glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given to them that they may be one just as we are one." Oh how I pray that you know God through faith in his Son and that you live for his glory. May I challenge you to ask yourself one very basic question: do others see the glory of God in my life? I pray that they do and may we all as believers be dedicated to this end. May we do the works of the one who has sent us, who has saved us, because my friends, the night is coming when we will no longer be able to work so let's rejoice in the high priestly work of our Lord Jesus who has carried all of our burdens into the presence of the living God and who has made atonement for our sins.

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Let's pray.

Father, thank you for these eternal truths. Thank you for the power of your word, the power of your Spirit that illumines our hearts and minds to be able to grasp them and would that your Spirit cause us to live them. Lord, for those that may be within the sound of my voice that do not know you, I pray that by your grace you will save them. I ask all of this in the name of the one who gave himself for us and the one who is coming again to take us unto himself, the Lord Jesus himself. Amen.

We pray you've been edified by this presentation. You have 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.