

The Grand Design

1 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, 2 as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. 3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. 4 I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. 5 And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. (John 17:1-5)

It's a strange and yet significant thing that we can tell a lot about the health of your body through your mouth. If we want to know your body temperature, or if you have a fever, one method is the old fashioned thermometer under the tongue. When your body is beginning to thirst, one of the first signs is dry lips. Your saliva can reveal hormonal levels, infectious diseases, presence of substance in your body. In fact, your DNA can be sequenced and tested just from a saliva sample. Your mouth reveals much about your body. I think that's rather symbolic of what Jesus said, when He said, "45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. (Luke 6:45) What you say out of your mouth really reveals what is in your heart, your mind. Your speech is like a verbal thermometer to tell us the health of your soul. And perhaps the most revealing kind of speech of all, is prayer. What we say in prayer, whether out loud, or silently, reflects the deepest desires and prayers of our hearts. Prayer is a window into your soul, showing us what you really want, what you treasure and value.

Prayer, as the old Westminster Shorter Catechism put it, is "an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ". Prayer is desire, desire verbalised and placed before God.

Eavesdrop on five minutes of a person's prayers, and you'll likely hear what they prioritise, what is most important to them.

So what would it be like to listen to God pray? What would we hear? If you think it is impossible that God should pray, then you have forgotten about John 17, or indeed, many passages in the Gospels where Jesus, the Son of God, prays. And here in John 17, we have the true Lord's Prayer.

This is sometimes called the real Lord's Prayer, because the famous Lord's Prayer given in Matthew 6 and Luke 11 is a prayer the Lord Himself would not have prayed, since it prays "Forgive us our trespasses" and Jesus Himself had no sin that He needed to confess. So that prayer is maybe better titled "The Disciples' Prayer", whereas John 17 is the true Lord's Prayer. It's the longest prayer in the New Testament.

It is also referred to as Jesus' High Priestly Prayer, because Jesus acts like a mediator here, a go-between, praying on behalf of His people. It gives us a glimpse into His present work as our High Priest in Heaven, making intercession for us even now. One of my teachers in the faith always used to end his prayers by saying, "And thank you Lord Jesus, that you are praying for us".

There's some debate over where Jesus prayed this prayer. We know that in the middle of the Upper Room Discourse, in 14:31, Jesus told the eleven to get up and walk with Him. Chapter 18:1 tells us that after praying the prayer, Jesus crossed the brook Kidron, and entered a Garden. So, it seems Jesus prayed this prayer on the way to Gethsemane, and not actually when in it.

The prayer itself has a fairly simple structure. In the first five verses, Jesus prays for Himself, a

prayer for praise for His Father and Himself as the Son.

From verses 6 to 19, Jesus prays for His disciples, a prayer for preservation or perseverance. From verses 20 to 26, Jesus prays for future disciples, the church, and prays for their perfection in unity and eventually in glorification in Heaven.

But it is a remarkable window into the soul of Jesus Christ, the true Messiah and Son of God. The inspired prayers of Paul in Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians are beautiful and wonderful examples to emulate. So are the prayers of David, and Asaph, and Solomon, and the sons of Korah found in the book of Psalms. But here we have the crown jewel: the prayer of God the Son to God the Father. It is the fitting conclusion to the great Upper Room Discourse from end chapter 13 to chapter 16, where Jesus taught us the Christian life now that He will be absent. Those deep and rich chapters about prayer, about abiding, about the indwelling Word, about Father, Son and Spirit, now come to their crescendo in this greatest of all the Bible's prayers. John Knox asked for John 17 to be read to Him on his deathbed.

And here, we are going to peer into the very inner sanctuary of the Trinity, as we hear what God desires, what God's great priority is. Because to know what God loves most of all, is to reach the very centre of why everything exists. It is to answer the great question: why are we here? What is the meaning of life, of existence. In the first five verses, as Jesus prays for Himself, He prays for the very purpose of life. There is only one request in these five verses, everything else is statements.

I. The Great Purpose: Supremacy

1 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You,

The Gospel of John has mentioned the coming of the hour, or the moment over seven times. Here Jesus knows that the great clock of redemption has finally struck 12 midnight. The time to fulfill His mission of the Cross has arrived.

So here is the great request. It is the only request in these first five verses where Jesus prays for Himself. It is found in verse 1 and 5: Glorify Your Son, Jesus says, so that your Son may glorify You.

The request is repeated in verse 5.

5 And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was

Verse 5 speaks of His heavenly, pre-incarnate glory. Jesus asks for that unveiled, unlimited glory which was His before the Incarnation to be restored to Him after His death, resurrection, and ascension. Glorify Me with yourself.

The word glory is used eight times in this prayer.

This is also an amazing petition, because in asking to be glorified with the Father, Jesus is claiming equal status with the Father. He is claiming to be divine, because Isaiah 42:8 says "I *am* the LORD, that *is* My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images."

Here is the very centre of existence: God's glory. The first question of the Westminster: what is the chief end of man? The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. The Heidelberg: "What is your only comfort in life and death?

A: That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful

Savior, Jesus Christ... and makes me heartily willing and ready from now on to live for Him, for His glory.

What is God's glory? God's glory is His excellence, His outshining loveliness, His infinite worth and value. It is all that He is, shining out in beauty for Himself and His creation to see and delight in. To put it another way: it is God's supremacy. His firstness. He is first in excellence, in perfection, in loveliness. This is His glory.

What then is it to glorify God? It is not to make Him more beautiful, for He is infinitely beautiful. It is to show forth, display, magnify that beauty for others to see and savour and delight in .

Jesus prays first and foremost for the glory of God. He prays the Father would glorify the Son, so that the Son can glorify the Father. And we've already seen in chapter 16 that the Holy Spirit glorifies Jesus. Likewise the Spirit ¹⁴ He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you (John 16:14)

At the absolute top of the list of desires that God has when God prays, is the glory of God.

Actually, if you read your Bible from cover to cover, you'll find that the glory of God is the central theme of the Bible. Here's a short list of examples.

God chose his people for his glory: (Ephesians 1:4-6)

God created us for his glory (Isaiah 43:6-7)

God called Israel for his glory (Isaiah 49:3).

God rescued Israel from Egypt for his glory:(Psalm 106:7-8)

God spared Israel in the wilderness for the glory of his name (Ezekiel 20:14)

God gave Israel victory in Canaan for the glory of his name:(2 Samuel 7:23)

God did not cast away his people for the glory of his name (1 Samuel 12:20, 22)

Jesus said that he answers prayer that God would be glorified: (John 14:13)

God forgives our sins for his own sake:(Isaiah 43:25)

God instructs us to do everything for his glory (1 Corinthians 10:31; cf. 6:20).

All are under judgment for dishonoring God's glory: (Romans 3:23)

Even in wrath God's aim is to make known the wealth of his glory: (Romans 9:22-23)

God's plan is to fill the earth with the knowledge of his glory:(Habakkuk 2:14)

Everything that happens will redound to God's glory:(Romans 11:36)

Jesus' ultimate aim for us is that we see and enjoy his glory:

Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. (John 17:24)

God's main purpose in creation is not man's salvation. Man's salvation is a means to the bigger and greater end: God's glory, God's supremacy.

Mutual glory, and shared glory. The Triune God's ultimate purpose to know and enjoy the glory of God. God's purpose is to enjoy God. God's first love is God. God's greatest delight is God. God is the most God-centred being of all. God is uppermost in His own affections.

Why? First, because it is true. He is most beautiful; and it would be a lie to treat anyone or anything else as valuable and as glorious as God.

Second, because it is good. God's beauty is the most blessed thing for creatures to experience. No one ever climbed mountain, or scuba-dived a coral reef, or looked through a telescope, or wandered

through a forest, and said to themselves, why should this landscape get all the praise? Why must I enjoy this beauty? After all, I'm also here! Actually, we seek out beauty because of the joy it brings us, because of how it takes us out of our narrow selves, because of the awe and wonder it evokes in us.

You don't want God to be centred on you. That would make God a liar, and it would deny you the lavish riches of His beauty. The best news in the world is that God loves His glory and wants to share it.

Jesus places as number one on His prayer list, the glory of God.

So how will God be glorified? The Great Purpose is carried out by a Grand Plan.

II. The Grand Plan: A Sovereign Saviour

as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.

Verse 2 begins with the word “as” which indicates a cause. Here is how God will be supremely admired, and supremely enjoyed. It is through a sovereign saviour.

Where do we see that? Look at this plan, which involved three gifts within the Trinity.

The Father gave the Son authority over all flesh – sovereignty over the whole world.

¹⁸ And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (Matthew 28:18)

³⁵ The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. (John 3:35)

²⁷ All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, (Matthew 11:27)

Jesus is King Messiah, Human king of every human king. Divine lord of every lord. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

With that sovereignty, the Son could give eternal life to people. Only the sovereign, the God-Man had the power to complete the work of the Cross. No angel, principality, power, throne, dominion in cosmic high places had the power to endure the wrath of God on the cross. Even though this work is still a few hours away, Jesus regards it as as good as completed.

4 I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.

Spurgeon said, “In truth, our Lord’s lowest stoop was his highest glory. He was never more resplendent than when he hung upon the cross, that was his true spiritual throne, so he prayed, “Glorify thy Son,” — Enable him to bear the agony, and to pass through it to the glory.” “That thy Son also may glorify thee.” The death of Christ was a great glorifying of God. We see his love and his justice rendered more glorious in the death of Christ than they would have been by any other method.”

The Father gave Jesus sovereignty. With that sovereignty, Jesus completed the work of redemption, He died and rose again, He can now give eternal life as a gift.

That brings us to the third gift. Jesus gives eternal life to those the Father gives to the Son. Eight times in this prayer, Jesus refers to believers as those the Father has given Him. Believers are a gift

from Father to Son. Unquestionably, the gift is given from the Father to the Son before they become believers, because Jesus says He gives eternal life to those the Father gives Him. He doesn't say, whoever He gives eternal life to, the Father then gives to Him. No, there is clearly the foreknowledge of God here choosing, the foreknowledge of the Father knowing all things and all men, and all outcomes, making some selection here. Of course, they had a human responsibility too, Jesus makes that clear in verse 8, “⁸ For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. (John 17:8)

Through a sovereign saviour saving a select people out of the world, God is glorified more than had He not created, or not saved. Three gifts: sovereignty, saviour, and selection. The word give or gift is used in some form or another 17 times in this passage.

The whole creation and human history is a gift-giving within the Triune Godhead, to maximise the enjoyment of his glory. The Father gives His Son a throne, but the way to that throne is through a cross. That cross brings more glory to the Son. The Son then redeems a perishing people, and gives them back to the Father as a rescued people. The Father gives them back to His Son as a Bride, to reign as His queen over the kingdom. The Son returns the kingdom to the Father, that the Father may be all in all, And all along the Spirit is exalting the Son, and is Himself glorified in the mutual love of Father and Son.

But we need not feel left out of this celebration. Because tucked away between the Great Purpose and the Grand Plan is the Gracious Present. There is a gift that we experience.

III. The Gracious Present: Seeing the Supreme Saviour

3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

Here Jesus describes the very heart of the grace gift of eternal life that He provided and gives. Eternal life is not primarily a place. Eternal life is not the place of Heaven, where you go when you die. Eternal life is not primarily just the elongation of your existence in its current state.

Eternal life, according to Jesus, is a special kind of knowing. You know the only true God, and you know Jesus Christ, the sent Messiah. Jesus is not contrasting Himself with the only true God. Far from it, He is equating the knowledge of the triune Godhead, represented by the Father, with the knowledge of Himself as the Divine Messiah, the God-Man Mediator. The way you know the living God is through the Saviour.

Jesus doesn't mean know about, or know of. Jesus means know in the way we speak of personal friendships, when someone mentions a name, “And you say, Oh, yes, I know him. We're friends.” Eternal life is knowing God on the level of personal, intimate relationship. You know Him the way a child knows a parent, the way spouses know each other.

Salvation is not primarily about getting out of hell, avoiding punishment. You can be entirely carnal, entirely selfish, and still devoted to self and want to go to heaven, and not want to go to hell. That might be a start, and it can even be a good start, but it is not the destination. The destination, the true reason why Heaven is Heaven is because there we know God in unveiled sight. The reason hell is hell is there we are cast out from even the common grace presence of God, to experience hIm only in wrath.

Real life, true life is a living, personal, experienced relationship with God.

Why is this life?

²³ Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise *man* glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty *man* glory in his might, Nor let the rich *man* glory in his riches; ²⁴ But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I *am* the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD. (Jeremiah 9:23–24)

Paul said that of all the things he had accumulated and achieved in his life as a religious man, he cast away

⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, ...¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, (Philippians 3:8–10)

To know God in this way is to enter into real life.

So how do you come to know Him in this way? Again verses 7 and 8:

⁷ Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. ⁸ For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. (John 17:7–8)

When you receive the Word of God's testimony about Jesus, and receive Him and trust in Him as the sent Son of God, the Saviour, the Sovereign, the Supreme One, then God grants you eternal life. He grants you living knowledge of Himself, so that He is not a distant God, but a known Father. And with the very life of God within you, when your body dies, your spirit goes to its home, the presence of God, awaiting the day of resurrection.

But you cannot know God and receive Him as long as you are clinging to self. But what happens to me if I surrender entirely to God in Christ?

"The more we let God take us over, the more truly ourselves we become - because He made us. He invented us. He invented all the different people that you and I were intended to be. . . It is when I turn to Christ, when I give up myself to His personality, that I first begin to have a real personality of my own." - That's when you are finally alive. That's when you have real life.

"The Father answered His Son's request and gave Him the glory. There is in heaven today a glorified Man, the God-Man, Jesus Christ! Because He has been glorified in heaven, sinners can be saved on earth. Anyone who trusts Jesus Christ will receive the gift of eternal life.¹"

When God prays the most important things in existence come out. The grand purpose of existence is His glory. The great plan of human redemptive is through a sovereign saviour saving some. The gracious present, the gift is the eternal life of personally knowing God in Christ.

Are you aligned the the Lord's Prayer. Are His desires your desires? Your first prayer should be, Lord give me the heart that loves what you love.

¹ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [*The Bible exposition commentary*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 368). Victor Books.