

Readings: John 17:1-5; Romans 8:28-39

Theme: Chosen in my Maker.

Last time, as we started looking at this High Priestly Prayer of Jesus, we saw glorious, yet mysterious matters – the glorification of the Son by the Father and the glorification of the Father by the Son! Perhaps these things were too quickly touched upon – as they involved Jesus’ going to the cross, dying in our place, His resurrection, ascension and coronation in heaven – His exaltation. Such things are part of God’s great plan of salvation to redeem people like us, who only deserve His wrath and judgement.

This is further shown by what follows on from v1 in v2-3. These truths are interconnected and are not stand-alone verses or truths. The glorification of the Son, of the Father are intimately connected with the giving of eternal life to us. Here in v2 we have the glorification of the Son and the Father emphasised in its outworking. The Son had received glory in that He had been granted, given all power, authority over all people - to give eternal life to them. The Father is glorified in that the Son gives this eternal life to as many, to all the Father had given Him and in v3 the glory of the Son and Father are further amplified in connection with this matter of eternal life.

There is a similarity in the structure of v1 & 2 - the request is made in v1 and the purpose of it; then again v2 - the statement is made and the purpose of it. There will be practical out workings from these in v2. Let’s see 2 things:

1. The authority given to the Son.

Jesus in making such an amazing request in v1; He did so because He knew it to be the fulfilment, the completion of the

commission He had been given by His Father. This section of the prayer reinforces and underlines that the things He asked for, are right and proper, are reasonable because of who He is and will do. He pleads His relationship - Father and Son; He pleads the time - His hour, His time having come; He pleads the Father's own interest - that He may glorify the Father and here in v2 He begins to plead the commission He had been given. The Lord Jesus is asking for these things, asking to be glorified in line with, in keeping with the eternal commission, the eternal work He had been given to do. As He does so, He speaks of the authority, the power He has been given, granted as part of that commission.

In the great commission at the end of Matthew's gospel, the Lord Jesus spoke from the position of having been given all power, all authority - there His death and resurrection had been accomplished, were actual historical and recent events. Here in v2, Jesus spoke of the decision of the Father outside of time to give the Son this authority, His power over all flesh - all people and refers to all humanity, young and old, from every people, tribe, tongue and nation throughout all history.

We are to note this authority is distinct from that which the Son possessed as being eternal God, One with the Father in eternity past. Yes, that authority and power was eternally His by right. He is mighty Christ from time eternal. Yet in the great plan and purpose of the triune God, the Son has been given has been invested with the power and authority that He, even as God, was not able to take and possess - as such could only be entered into by His incarnation, perfect life, His suffering, death and fullest exaltation.

It is as the Saviour, the Mediator, the Saviour King which Jesus was invested with power and authority to give eternal life to whosoever will believe, that whosoever goes to Him, He will in no wise cast out - no matter how bad or evil they have been or feel they have been; no matter how moral or good they think they have been - for all need to be saved and whosoever goes to Jesus can be saved by going to the source of eternal life.

All of us are people - “flesh”, mere humanity and none of us has power or ability within ourselves to save ourselves, to make ourselves perfectly acceptable to or with God. No power on earth can save us, no power of the earth can save us - New-Age followers emphasise mankind’s ability to heal themselves from within, to harness the earth’s life force, but there’s only One invested with the power to give eternal life, to deal with our hurting, sin infected lives and that One is the Lord Jesus.

This is part of His being glorified by the Father. It is still an ongoing, continuing process in our day for the Lord Jesus still has authority over all people, “flesh” - even the unbelieving members of our families, friends, workmates; even over those who have no interest, even having hatred against Christ, for He can give them eternal life by an exercise, use of that great power. Our Saviour’s arm is not shortened that He cannot save. It is not weakness that few seem to be saved. We need to note this, apply it, to plead it in prayer and call on Him to make this power known, even dare challenge Him! This is a practical application in our prayer life, for our confidence to proclaim God’s word. Before giving the great commission, Jesus says all power is His; then sends His people out into a

world that would really not be bothered with Him or them. These things are for our encouragement. There was a purpose in His being given much authority and we move on to see:

2. The purpose rooted in eternity past.

The Son was given this authority before time began for the work of the great plan of salvation - which He would soon finish. This is a great and glorious salvation; yet even though the Son has power, authority over all people, yet this salvation is not a universally automatic salvation. Some question this!

There are those who teach that basically everyone, everywhere will be saved and all will be in heaven - as if all Jesus did was to come to make up our shortcomings and allow all go to heaven. They're very well-meaning and nice people to say such things; their pronouncements are often well received and sound so lovely. Yet begin to press them and ask them do they really mean all! Then ask about mass murderers, those involved in genocides throughout history, even be specific - Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, the Taliban, those who are at present hurting, mutilating people for perverted pleasure and you find out that some are excluded, so ask what happens to them!

Jesus said His purpose in receiving all power over all flesh was to give eternal life, not to everyone in an indiscriminate way, but to give eternal life to those God the Father has specifically given to Him. Some people will object to such a statement - they say God is not fair if He did that. They then may question: it doesn't matter that you believe or not, if God hasn't given you to the Son, then you are lost. Others say that if this is true, that the chosen ones would be saved anyway,

then we don't need to preach the gospel, because they are chosen already! I disagree with such statements and with many others which speak contrary or falsely about the truth set before us in this verse.

We are always to begin with God and the clear truth of God in approaching difficult subjects - even this mysterious truth. God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the triune God, a mystery that is beyond reason and understanding, but the Bible presents to us 3 members of the Godhead. Each of them is distinct, each having the same attributes and yet each one is termed and called God. What we understand from looking at God's self-revelation in His word, is that the 3 members of the Godhead are all equal, have the same nature and Being and yet are definably distinct. In the godhead there is a mutual, complete satisfaction and enjoyment of one another's company and they did not lack anything, nor need anyone else or anything else to be fulfilled.

God created all things – the spiritual realm, the world, the universe; things seen and unseen – for His own pleasure, doing so for His own glory. Within that plan of Creation was man and God made man, even knowing mankind would fall, sin. Yet in His grace, wisdom God made man not as programmed robots, but gave Adam and Eve free will to choose to love Him. Even as Creation's plan was made, there was, what, theologians term, the Council of Salvation or Redemption. Where God set His love on an undeserving people throughout all history. He planned to bring about the way to reconcile Him to them and them to Him. The pinnacle of that plan would involve His wrath being poured out on a member of the godhead who would become a man. God the

Son took to Him that work; the Father gave to the Son this people. Their eternal happiness was given over to Him. Yes, the Father and the Holy Spirit were concerned, involved and would be working in the process of time.

The apostle Paul in Romans 8:29-30 tells a small bit of this process that began in eternity past, which is expressed in the process of time and will go on into eternity to come. The Lord God has chosen to Himself His people and did so not on the basis of any merit in anyone; not due to their morals, potential, abilities, feelings, background or even their eventual believing, but its foundation is in His sovereign, unconditional choice based on His love.

None of mankind i.e. “flesh” deserve any good thing from God. What all of us deserve is His just anger and eternal punishment. No-one in hell will ever say God’s judgement was unfair, or it was a miscarriage of justice. All will own they deserved hell for eternity! They will not enjoy or like such, but they will own that hell is right for them and what they justly deserve.

Yet God in His love, grace and mercy chose to save some undeserving ones of mankind - because He chose to! God sits outside of time and sees all people in all generations and He chose to Himself a people and gave them to the Son, so that the Son’s death would be effective in accomplishing their salvation. The great work of redemption the Son accomplished is sufficient for all people, but it is limited in its effectiveness to only those who are God’s elect, to those who have been loved with an everlasting love and will, in the process of their lives, be led by God’s grace that love to know.

This has practical and theological questions; even implications, concerns and questions about preaching, telling the gospel being really necessary! Is it necessary to all people? My answer is “Yes” because the God who chose His people, has chosen to use the foolishness of the preaching of the gospel and it is His ordained primary means to bring His people to know Him and His love. Some ask, do we need to pray? Again, the answer is “Yes” for the same reason. Both preaching and prayer can then go on knowing God will fulfil His purposes, will save His people, will work for His glory. We have the amazing privilege to pray for people and to proclaim the gospel, share the good news with people and as we do so, we leave the fruit to God.

The salvation of souls is a sovereign work of God from 1st to last as we see in Romans 8:29-30 - there is a golden linked chain that runs from eternity past, into time through to eternity to come.

God does not save people against their will, nor save people by accident! He deliberately saves and saves those He set His love on and gave to His Son in eternity. Without this we could have all sorts of doubts and fears such as - have we done enough; are we religious enough. Yet when we see our salvation is based on, rooted in God’s unmerited electing love and we have been brought to know such, then we see salvation is wholly of God; therefore, it is eternal and eternally secure.

There is so much of this electing love of God in OT and NT that we would have to do intellectual and theological gymnastics to avoid recognising it, or have to have extreme

spiritual short-sightedness to avoid seeing it and to remain with a man centred view of the wonder of the work of salvation.

We may not grasp all the things we've touched upon this morning, but let's try to get some direct lessons for ourselves. Ask ourselves if we know God's love? Do not ask if we are elect. How can we know if you are one of God's chosen people? We need to see our need to trust the Lord Jesus and trust Him – for God's chosen, elect, are known by their coming to trust the Lord Jesus as their own Saviour. God commands us to believe, trust and not to probe the mystery of divine election. The bottom line is that we have to trust the Lord Jesus as our own Saviour - by repenting and trusting Him. We are not to doubtfully question God on matters we cannot even begin to understand.

I urge us all, not to stand in doubt, but to view God's sovereign love and grace in the Lord Jesus and adore this God and Saviour - that He should be willing to set His love on any mortal person of frail flesh, let alone us; and we are to do so with a sense of bated breath and wonder that we have been or can be recipients of His love, grace, mercy and forgiveness in and through the Lord Jesus, when He is our Saviour.