



**BELIEVERS CHAPEL**

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

John 17: 6-10

Spring 2023

"The Lord's Prayer For His Disciples"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning. We are in the Gospel of John chapter 17, and we're going to look this morning at verses 6 through 10. John 17, beginning with verse 6. Jesus has prayed for Himself. Now He turns His attention to His eleven,

<sup>6</sup> "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. <sup>7</sup> Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; <sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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; <sup>10</sup> and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them.

John 17: 6-10

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word, and bless our time of study in it together. Let's ask the LORD's blessing upon us.

Father, we do that, we ask Your blessings upon us, and Your blessings upon us in this hour as we study this passage of Scripture, this great prayer that Your Son prayed to You hours before He would be arrested, tried, and crucified. And we see in this, (while He had that great passion before Him, that time of great physical agony, and even the greater spiritual agony of knowing that He would be separated from You when He would sweat drops of blood in the garden), that He spends so much of this priestly prayer of His, praying for others—for His disciples, and then for us. That was on His heart; those are whom He loved.

And we are thankful that His love for us is Your love for us. And we see that so clearly demonstrated in this text of Scripture. You gave us to Him, and gave us to Him that He might redeem us and make us part of Your family, and be with You for all eternity.

LORD, this is a text of some theological weight, and for some, of some difficulty. But it's a passage that, if we understand it, is a great, great encouragement to us. It reflects Your infinite love for us—that You would give us to Your son. That is an eternal love, Father, and may we understand that of You, and may the understanding that You give us of this text be something that affects us in our daily life—gives us confidence, gives us reassurance, and gives us boldness as we speak to others about You. Give us opportunities to do that; and may we have the words of salvation for them. So LORD, bless us as we study this text this morning. May the Spirit of God teach us, build us up in the faith, help us to understand it, and how it applies to us.

But LORD, we have this great privilege to pray for Your people. Just as Your Son prayed for us, we too, now in Christ are priests who can pray for ourselves, pray for one another, and pray for Your glory that it be done. And we do that Father, we pray that You would bless.

Also we pray that you'd bless Vacation Bible School that's coming up; bless the teachers and the workers, and bless the children that come. We pray that You'd open these young hearts to receive the instruction that's given, the revelation that they will

hear, and that many may be brought to faith in Jesus Christ. So we commit that very important ministry to You. Thank You for those that are volunteering and working in it.

Bless us physically, Father. We pray for good health that comes from You. We live and move and exist in You. Every breath of life, as Daniel told Belshazzar, comes from You. (Dan 5:23). As he worshiped false Gods, he dishonored You. As he worshiped false Gods in a despicable orgy, the last night of his life, he was despising You who gave him every breath of life that he had at that moment. That's the world we live in.

Yet, You've taken us 'out of that world', and we're reminded of that in our text. We praise You for it; we thank You for it. May we grow in Christ and understand more, and live humble lives of deep appreciation for all that You've done for us in Your Son. It's in His name we pray. Amen.

*(Message)* John 17 is a prayer. It is commonly known as 'the Lord's high priestly prayer', a title first given to it by a Lutheran theologian, a student of Phillip Melanchthon, named David Chytraeus in the 16th century. It's a good title, because Jesus is our "great high priest." (Heb 4:14). The author of Hebrews calls Him that and in these last chapters of John's Gospel we see Him functioning in His priestly duties.

Those duties are modeled after the priesthood of Aaron, Israel's first high priest. Aaron, as all the priests of Israel, stood as the representative of the people before God. Prophets represented God to the people; they spoke His Word to them. Priests represented the people to God. His work was twofold: Intercessory, and sacrificial. He prayed for the people and he offered sacrifices for their sins. And that is what the Lord did in the last hours of His earthly life.

He has finished instructing His disciples in what has been called 'the upper room discourse', or 'the farewell discourse'. In a short time He would do His sacrificial work by offering Himself up on the cross for the sins of His people; for He came into the world for that purpose.

But that would be the moment of His disciples greatest trial. They would be scattered, like sheep without a shepherd; they would run off, disillusioned. So the Lord performed His intercessory work as a priest by praying for them. He committed them to the care of His Father and prayed that the benefits of His atoning death, of His sacrifice on the cross, would be applied to them.

He's already prayed for Himself in verses 1 through 5. He prayed that the Father would glorify Him. It's not a self-aggrandizing prayer, it's not a selfish prayer because His glory is in the salvation of His people; His glory is to our benefit. He described them, (He described His people, He described His disciples), in verse 2 as those, 'whom the Father had given to Him.' They were God's gift to His Son. Earlier Jesus called them, 'His friends'. (Jn 15:15). So now, out of great love for them, out of great concern for them, He turns from Himself to pray for them. The rest of the prayer is for His followers, His disciples, and then for the church to come—for us.

Verses 6 through 19 are for the immediate circle of His disciples, and that's clear from verse 12. It begins, "While I was with them..." But all that He says in these verses, from verse 6 down through verse 19, all of that is true of all believers. He says, in verse 20, "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those who believe in Me through their word." In other words, the prayer is for believers down through the ages; and so we can apply His Words here in this text to ourselves as well.

In these first verses of His prayer for the disciples, verses 6 through 10, the Lord doesn't actually make requests for them; that comes later when He prays for their safety and their sanctification. In these first verses He gives the basis for His prayer for them, the reason He prayed for them and the reason that the Father should answer His prayer—the disciples belonged to the Father. Even before the Lord's mission began, before Jesus called the disciples to come and follow Him, they belonged to His Father.

He indicates that in verse 6, where He states that He had revealed the Father to, "...the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me....". Now, right there we learn something about the love of God that it is

*distinguishing*; it is for a *particular* people. The Lord didn't say that the Father gave to Him, 'all who are in the world', but men, "out of the world". In other words, *some*—not *all*.

And He has the sovereign right to do that because they belonged to Him; "...they are Yours...", Jesus said. They belonged to God from the beginning, "from all eternity", as Paul says in 2 Timothy, chapter 1, verse 9. "From all eternity" they belong to God. Well, that is when grace was granted to all who have been given to Christ.

We are His from the standpoint of God's eternal election; that God chose us for Himself and the Son chose us for Himself. There's unity in the Godhead. And that's what Christ said back in chapter 15, verse 16. "You did not choose Me but I chose you..." Salvation is all of God, all of grace—which is sovereign, free grace. That doesn't simply mean that salvation is a gift for all who take it, (it is, and that is true), but it also means that our participation in salvation is a *gift*. We belong to the Savior because, (and only because), we have been *given* to Him by His Father.

Now I suppose I could talk around this subject of God's choice of His people, (or 'divine election'), but that would not be honest with the text and it would not be fair to you. This is the teaching of the passage—and it's the teaching of the Bible.

And there is nothing more edifying than this; nothing produces more gratitude in the heart of a person, in the heart of a Christian, than God's free grace, God's sovereign grace. It humbles us and it honors Him. But also, there's nothing more encouraging: That's how much He cares for us. He *chose* us; He *chose* us *personally* from all eternity.

In his book, *The Farewell Discourse*, Don Carson wrote, "Christians often think of Jesus as God's gift to us. We rarely think of ourselves as God's gift to Jesus." But as he points out, the two gifts are not parallel because while God's gift of Jesus to us is for our benefit, His gift of us to Jesus is also for our benefit. It is all of God. He chooses us, (and He has the sovereign right and power to do that), to present a gift of certain blessed people to His Son. That glorifies God.

And again, it should humble us. Especially in view of how the Lord described His disciples in verse 6, (and described them in a way that applies to each and every one of us). He said, 'They had been given to Him', "out of the world." They were part of this fallen, restless humanity—and rebels right along with it. And so there was nothing in them that distinguished them from others, nothing in them that 'qualified' them to be chosen above others and given to Christ for salvation.

And that's why the doctrine of divine election is such an effective antidote to human arrogance—to human pride. It robs us of any ground of boasting in ourselves. If anyone believes that he or she is worthy of salvation, he or she doesn't understand grace.

On the other hand, anyone who thinks he or she is too unworthy of God's love doesn't understand the depth and the richness of God's love. When the Pharisees criticized the Lord for associating with tax collectors and sinners, He told them, "It is not for those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick..." (Mar 2:17). Christ is the great physician; so He came for sinners. He came to heal them; He came for those who were unable heal themselves or to save themselves. He came for the most unworthy. He came even for, 'the chief of sinners', as Paul would later say. (1Tim 1:15).

God's grace is big enough for them—and bigger. And if we understand it rightly, then we understand what we are by nature—sinners, guilty, and unworthy. God gave Jesus His disciples "out of the world". His *chosen ones* are neither better nor more deserving than those not chosen. He passed over some, (and He left them in their fallen state), —He chose others. But why He chose you rather than someone else, why He chose Jacob, the deceiver, over Esau, his brother—that's the mystery of grace.

We do know this: It's due to God's love and not our merit. And we know that unconditional election is taught in the Bible. Well, maybe this seems like I'm 'begging the question' in saying that. I have a list of verses I could read to you, but Ephesians chapter 1, verse 4 is written to those '*chosen*', Paul says. And then he speaks of how He "*predestined*" us to salvation. (vs5). Peter himself begins 1 Peter, (vs1), by writing to the

"chosen" who were 'scattered abroad in Asia Minor.' And so it goes, that all through the Word of God we read about this doctrine of unconditional election.

So, we might ask, 'Well, who are the elect? That's what we're talking about here; How do we identify them? How do people know God has chosen them for salvation and that Christ died for them?'

Well there's no special identifying mark that sets them apart; but there is evidence of it. Faith is the principle sign; not the only sign, but it is the principle sign: 'The elect believe.'

Jesus said that 'He had *revealed* God', (vs6a); that 'He had *revealed* God's name to them', meaning that He had made know the person, nature, and the character of God to His disciples.

Now in the Bible, the name of a person, as you know, expresses the person's character. It defines the person. And that's particularly true of God—of the Father and the Son. And they have different names; but one is *Jesus*. That's what the angel told Joseph to name Him: In Matthew chapter 1, verse 21, 'You will name Him Jesus', "for He will save His people from their sins." And *Jesus* means, the "LORD saves"; "He will save His people from their sins."

And so, Jesus meant that He had revealed the Father to the disciples. He disclosed Him in His very behavior, in His character and conduct, in His person—and in His Words. And He added, "...they have kept Your word." (6c); they have obeyed it. They have trusted in Him, and they were acting in obedience to that faith.

Now their faith was small and weak. We see that throughout the Gospels, and we see it here in the upper room. Throughout that evening you could see their faith, their understanding was very small, very weak. Perfection is not expected of the elect, of the believer. We grow throughout our Christian life. We never attain perfection this side of the grave, "Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face;" Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:12. Presently, knowledge isn't complete and obedience isn't perfect—

not until heaven. But the disciples had truly trusted in Jesus as the Messiah. Peter confessed that in chapter 6.

You'll remember, that's the chapter where He fed the multitude, 'the 5000', (which is really, probably 'the 20,000'), and the great miracle that took place. But the next day, when the multitude find Him on the other side of the sea, they speak to Him; they want 'more of that bread'. And He explains to them that, 'They need the bread that comes down from heaven; they need salvation, not material things.'

Well, by the time He finishes speaking to them, they depart; they leave Him. They go a different way. What a moment it was in the Lord's ministry, when He has one day this multitude that adore Him and want to make Him king, and the next day they're all leaving; 'These things are too hard to listen to', they said. (Jn 6:65).

And so at that moment, Jesus asked His disciples, 'Are you not going to leave as the others did? (vs67). And that's when Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." (vs68). They believed those words; they believed that He was "the Holy One of God." (vs69). So they had faith, and they have exhibited that.

Now in our text, in verses 7 through 8, the Lord states that, 'they know that His teaching was from God, and that He Himself had come forth from the Father.' Their understanding was incomplete, but what they knew was real. They really did understand what they had been given, the basics—and they believed it.

And that distinguished them from the world, which had no faith. In fact, we could take comfort in the fact that despite their failings and their lack of understanding, despite their weakness, that Christ counted them as having kept His Word. How discouraging it would be if the evidence of election was full understanding of the revelation of God—and no failure. None of us would be counted among the elect. But the Lord said elsewhere, 'Faith as small as a mustard seed' is sufficient to receive salvation. (Luke 17:6). That was the faith of the disciples.



So, the elect believe; and continue in faith with persevering faith—and they grow. There are setbacks, failures, even doubts. But the evidence of election is faith; it's keeping God's Word.

Election is not simply 'to salvation'. Some people think, 'Well, if you're elect, you're saved.' Well, if you're elect, you're going to be saved, but election is not simply, in itself, 'to salvation'. It is, 'to salvation through faith'. People are elected to believe; and they grow. So, we are chosen by God to be believers.

That's how Luke put it in Acts chapter 13, verse 48, "...as many as had been appointed to eternal life, believed." Maybe we can explain it in this way; 'as many as had been predestined from all eternity to life, eternal life—they believed.' So in this verse, the Lord gave both the divine side of salvation—and the human side. God always takes the initiative: He chose some; He chose many in eternity before creation; and His election is unconditional.

But again, the elect respond. The disciples obeyed Jesus' word. Divine sovereignty doesn't eliminate human responsibility. Election doesn't dismiss the human will in the mind. We are not automatons; we are not robots or puppets. We are sentient, rational creatures. That's how God has made us. We're made in His image. Even in a fallen condition we hear, we think, we feel, we act. We are what the older theologians used to call, '*free agents*', meaning we act freely—not under coercion, not by force.

Everyone acts freely, according to his or her nature. And this is where we see grace. This is where we see sovereign grace, because all mankind is born with a sinful, rebellious nature. And if that seems like I'm being hard on humanity, that's what Paul said in Romans chapter 8, verse 7: We are by nature, "at enmity" with God—at war with God.

That's the situation of mankind. He has a rebellious nature; he or she chooses freely. He always does what he wants to do, but it's always according to his or her fallen nature. That's what Martin Luther meant when he wrote of *The Bondage Of The Will*. He didn't deny the existence of the will, but he denied that it was free, independent of God,

independent of anything. No, he spoke of *the bondage of the will*, and not that people can't choose God when they want to, but that they *can't want to* choose God or please Him.

My daughter and son-in-law have a nice little dog who, to the horror of my daughter, has a taste for bunny rabbits. A sweet dog, but that's her nature. She's a carnivore—that's what they do. So a cheetah runs down an antelope...(it's not pleasant to watch. In fact, I always root for the antelope.)...but that's the nature of the cheetah, to eat meat. Elephants and cows are herbivores. They eat plants, not lions; it's their nature. They all act according to their nature.

And people always act freely according their nature, which is, in the natural situation, fallen and sinful—and self-justifying. We need enlightenment from above if we are to change or be changed—then we believe. In fact, we need a new heart, we need a new nature—and that's what we receive by the grace of God in regeneration, in salvation.

Now it may not be easy to understand all of this. It may not be easy to understand God's sovereignty and man's responsibility and how it all fits together, but the Bible teaches both—and to borrow from Dr. Don Carson, "...moves from predestination to faith without embarrassment."

And because the Father had given the disciples to His Son, and they had believed, He was praying for them, and them only. That's what the Lord said next in verse 9. "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours;...". He didn't say what He asked for or prayed for them; that will come later in this section of the high priestly prayer when He prays for their safety and their sanctification. Here He gave the reason that He prayed for them; it's because they belonged to the Father, "...for they are Yours", He said.

We can understand that. He prayed for those who belonged to the Father because the Father loved them. And they had been given to Him, to Jesus, and He loves them. But what is striking about the prayer is that He does not pray for the world;

all whom the Father has not given to Him; "...I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me." (9b).

It does make sense, though, when we understand His prayer as His high priestly ministry in which there is perfect harmony, perfect agreement, between His work of intercession and His work of sacrifice. So this is a prayer for His friends, for His people. It is deliberately restricted to those who belong to the Father and have been given to Him.

What took place here, and on the cross, was illustrated in the clothing and service of Aaron's high priesthood under the Old Covenant in the Old Testament. When Aaron entered the holy place of the Tabernacle, he entered wearing the ephod, which was a garment that covered his shoulders and his chest. On each shoulder of the ephod was a stone, engraved with the names of the tribes of Israel—six on one, six on the other.

On the breast piece that he wore, that was covered with four jewels, (precious stones), were the names of the sons of Israel, the names of the 12 tribes on each stone that, (as Moses wrote, or as the LORD instructed him in Exodus 28, verse 29), "...they would be over his heart when he entered the holy place for a memorial before the LORD continually."

He was high priest for Israel only. He didn't serve the Gentiles. When he stood before the LORD, he didn't carry the names of the Egyptians or the Hittites, the Huns, or the Britons, or the Babylonians. —He represented Israel only. Only *they* were carried on his shoulders to indicate that God bore them up by His strength. Only *they* were over his heart to indicate God's special affection for them. When Aaron offered sacrifices, he offered none for the Gentiles; his sacrifices were for Israel alone, God's covenant people, His chosen nation, His children.

All of this illustrates the Lord's high priestly service. It's for His people, for those the Father has given to Him. And the New Covenant, it's not simply for Israel or for the elect of Israel, it is for the elect of all the nations, who have been taken "out of the

world", *chosen* "out of the world"; some out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation. His prayer and sacrifice were designed for their blessing and salvation. And God would answer His prayer and accept His sacrifice with the result that Jesus would save His people from their sins in fulfillment of His name, *Jesus*, and fulfillment of Matthew chapter 1, verse 21, "He will save His people from their sins."

Now this is not to suggest that the Lord has no concern for the world. He does. He's its creator, and He blesses the world every day with what is called *common grace*—with good things. He has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked"—of anyone who dies. That's Ezekiel 33, verse 11. He is longsuffering. He is patient with the lost, and He gives numerous temporal blessings to them, (which is really all that they want).

As the Savior and Shepherd, though, His love and His eternal care are for His sheep, for those whom the Father loved and gave to Him. And as their priest, His intercession and sacrifice are for them. And because of this priestly ministry of His for them, (being a sacrifice for these disciples and praying for them), He can speak confidently in verse 10 of them glorifying Him; "...and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them."

That's an extraordinary statement. Anyone can say to God, "All my things are Yours" —and that's true. But who can say, "All Your things are Mine?" No mere mortal can say that. Jesus' statement indicates, again, that He's more than a man—that He is equal with the Father. And they are united in purpose, which is to save and bless their people who are their possessions.

But because He is equal with the Father, His priestly work, and sacrifice, and prayer for the disciples would be effective. And they would glorify Him, and they would be a success in their mission in the world in which He would send them.

Now that's extraordinary. These men showed little understanding here in the upper room. Even at this late hour, they just didn't seem to get it. And soon they'd all desert Him. And yet He prayed, "I have been glorified in them." (vs10b).

Now interestingly, it's hard to see how at this point He'd been 'glorified in them'. He has to keep correcting them and enlightening them. But He says, "I have been glorified", *in the past tense*. That is what is called, (and we see this periodically in the apostle Paul), it's what's called *a prophetic perfect*. It's a statement about the future, but stated *in the past tense*. And it's a way of saying that the mission that they would go on, what they would do, was so certain to occur, and the glory that He would receive from them is so certain to happen, that it is as though that it's already happened. There is nothing more certain than what has happened in the past—that's fixed. And so He's saying with complete confidence, 'They are going to glorify Me', but He says it *in the past tense* to make the certainty of it very clear.

He knew them completely. He knew them past, present, and future. He knew their election and calling from the past—from eternity past. He knew their hearts there in the present as they sat with Him in that room. He knew that they all, all eleven of them, had real faith—weak faith, but it was real faith. And He knew what would come; He knew the future and how the Holy Spirit would be with them to teach them, to lead them, to sanctify them, and make them increasingly knowledgeable and holy.

So He prayed for them with prayer that was in complete and perfect harmony with His Father's will—and so it was certain to be fulfilled. The prayers of the Son of God and our great high priest, cannot fail.

And that is certain for all of the Lord's disciples, for every believer in Him. Weak and insufficient as we all are, He is praying for us now. He is praying for you at this very moment that we will glorify Him. In the Book of Hebrews, which is so much about Christ as our great high priest, it is said in Hebrews chapter 7, verse 25, "He always lives to make intercession for us."

What a great statement that is! There's never a moment in your existence as His child that He is not praying for you. And we can have no one better praying for us than the eternal Son of God.

So if you're a believer in Christ, He's praying for you now. His concern for you is boundless. He died for you; He is praying for you individually, personally, and constantly. So when we fail, as those disciples did in that hour on that night, and we wonder about our security and salvation, wonder about God's love for us— 'Have we disqualified ourselves?', remember this passage—and remember His electing love. It should produce a stable faith; it should produce gratitude.

We are loved by the Godhead. We are loved by the Father, by the Son, by the Holy Spirit, with an infinite eternal love—a special love that distinguishes us from the world. It is an eternal love that cannot fail. And through His prayers for us He is able to make us useful and glorify Him in our service to Him, just as He did those disciples. We have infinite spiritual resources to enable us to live to God's glory.

Remember that boy, called a *"lad"* in chapter 6? (vs9). He had a small lunch—a basket with a few loaves and fishes. He gave it to the Lord, and the Lord fed a multitude with it—20,000 people, with a few loaves and fishes. Every believer in Jesus Christ has been chosen and called by God Almighty and gifted for a purpose of service—every one of us. What He's given us may be a small basket with a few loaves and fishes—but He is able to use it greatly. It's not us—it's Him. It's Him in us; and Him praying for us.

And this doctrine of election is an encouragement in that: It's not only the basis of our security, (that God loved us unconditionally from all eternity), but it gives us confidence in service—daily service. It gives us confidence when we have the opportunity to do evangelism, to speak to someone we may happen to meet, or the conversation comes up. And we can have confidence to speak to that person about the work of the Lord, about His grace and goodness and love.

An example of that is Acts 18 verse 10, when Paul was in Corinth facing opposition. It was a difficult moment for him, a difficult time, for he'd been rejected by the Jews. That's when the Lord told him in a vision in the night, a dream in the night, 'I have many people in this city; go on preaching.' And that gave him incentive to do just that; to go on preaching the Gospel.

Look, God's elect are not few in number—they are *many*! And their number is great because God's love is great, so election should give us confidence in the act of evangelism. But also, it should give us confidence and peace in life, as well.

I know that it is hard for many to accept election; it is hard for some Christians to accept that God gave *some* to His Son and not all—that He *chose some*. It seems unfair to people, but remember, if it is taught in the Bible, if it is ascribed to God, then it can't be unfair. Maybe it seems that way to us, but if it does, the problem's with us—not with Him. It must be a blessing if it's what God does. And it's taught in the Bible, as I said, and it's taught in this passage. Remember: 'Election is to salvation through faith in Christ.' If you want it, if you want Christ and you want to be His disciple, then believe. God will receive you. But that's not what people want, is it?

At this point, as I talk about election, I often appeal to the wisdom of Spurgeon on this. He would say, "There are some who say, 'It's hard for God to choose some and leave others.' If anyone asks that question, 'Is there anyone of you here this morning who wishes to be regenerate? Do you wish to have new life? Do you wish to be a follower of Jesus Christ?' If, (Mr. Spurgeon said), someone would say, 'Yes, I do.', then he would answer, 'God has elected you.' But if someone should say, 'No, I don't want to give up my lusts; I don't want to give up my life; I don't want to follow Christ. —I'm not interested in the eternal life that you speak of.', (then Spurgeon would say), 'But if you don't desire it, why on earth should you be so preposterously foolish as to grumble because God gives, that which you do not like, to other people?!' "

Good point, Charles—if you want life, come to Christ. He has promised to receive, 'the one who comes to Him, and never cast him out'.—That's John chapter 6, verse 37. But if you don't want life, you must be content with God's decision to pass you over and leave you in the sins that you have chosen and that you enjoy.

Let me quote, (and listen to this quote), from the LORD in Ezekiel chapter 33, verse 11. I've referred to it earlier, but it's a message to Israel—Israel in rebellion, "The LORD said to Ezekiel, 'Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord God, 'I take no pleasure in

the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?' " Or, 'Why do you choose death? I offer you life!'

So that's the option that's put before all of us. That's the choice that we have: Life or Death. If you have not seen yourself for what you are, lost and guilty, and have not trusted in Christ for salvation, we invite you to come to Him for forgiveness. He will receive you. That's His promise. He will make you clean and fit for heaven and able to live well in this world as His servant—and able to glorify Him and be a blessing to others.

So come to Him, if you have not. Trust in Him. He has done everything for us by His sacrifice on the cross. He declared at the end of it all, "It is finished." There's nothing more to be added to it—nothing but simply receive the gift of life that He has obtained for all who believe in Him, who come to Him through faith alone: Faith in Him, in Christ alone. May God help you to do that.

*(Closing Prayer)* Father, what a great thing it is to know that the love of our Redeemer, that the love of the Triune God can never fail, and that Your Son, in obedience to You, came, died in our place, and washed our sins away. Though we're still guilty of sin and we still commit it in our daily life, but when You look at us You look at us as clothed in Your Son, as righteous in Your sight—we're forgiven of it all and You're going to make us perfect someday. May we rejoice in that, rejoice in Your eternal love for us, for Your people. —Multitudes of people beyond our ability to number, thank You for numbering us among them. May we live to Your honor and glory.

And now the LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance on you and give you peace. In the name of Christ, Amen.

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