

**The Prayer of Jesus**  
**Pastor Ty Blackburn**  
**John 12:27-28**  
**March 16, 2014**

...the 12<sup>th</sup> Chapter of John's Gospel. Picking up where we left off the second Sunday in December, in the 12<sup>th</sup> Chapter of John. We come this morning to a new subsection in a larger section, 12:20-36. Chapter 12:20-36 is the larger section of the book that we're studying, but Verse 27 and Verse 28 are going to be our focus this morning. The title of the message is 'The Prayer of Jesus'. The prayer that He offers in these verses is quite instructive, and in fact, very encouraging when we really understand and comprehend why God included this in the Bible.

What we're going to see is that it is a prayer very much like the prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. There are some commentators that foolishly try to explain away the Bible. It is amazing, they are Bible commentators, and they study the New Testament, and the Old Testament, and they come out saying things like this. But some people act like John is just confused, and he's reading what happened in Gethsemane ahead in time because we are going to see that Jesus basically says something very similar to what He said in Gethsemane, **'Father, save Me from this hour'**? He essentially then affirms the same thing He says in Gethsemane again when He says, **'Father, glorify Your name.'** as He anticipates the cross, and the awful weight of sin, His heart is overwhelmed, and He is looking for God to deliver Him from this burden. Then He expresses that, "Father, save Me from this hour. Should I say, 'Save me from this hour.'" Nevertheless, He basically says the same thing, "Not My will, Your will be done. Your name be glorified." And I said that sometimes commentators act like John is recording Gethsemane, which will happen later this week, too early.

You know it just seems like sometimes people just need to use a little common sense. If you have ever had something that you were dreading, and most of us have, maybe it is a term paper, something not so bad. It seems bad when you are in college or high school, but doesn't it, "Oh my goodness, that term paper looming out there."? You don't just think about it once, do you? But how about something worse? The MRI, or the CT Scan, or the surgery, or the report about the CT Scan, or the MRI, or the surgery, and it's not something you think about just one time. When you really dread something it keeps pressing itself upon you, and of course that is what is happening in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. He knows He's heading to the cross, and from time to time the weight of that, the shadow of the cross weighs in upon Him so much that He finds Himself dealing with the anguish

of that. So He dealt with it here, and then He deals with it again later in the week, the night before He is crucified.

But it is the prayer of Jesus, and the fact that God includes this prayer in Scripture, that I want you to consider the question *Why?* Think about that for a moment, because so often we lose the impact of passages because of familiarity. We know about Gethsemane. If you've been around the church, and you've been reading your Bible for long, you've read that passage. You may have heard it talked about, or preached on any number of times. Sometimes familiarity lessens the impact, and really the kind of attitude that really comes to Scripture, and gets something that God wants us to get there. I mean, when we go to the word of God, He wants us to come with hearts that are engaged, studying, asking questions. "Lord, why is it that You included this? Why did You say this? Why did You say it this way?" I think it is really something just to ponder.

Why would the Lord have put this situation in the Scripture, this prayer, and now we know clearly more than once? We have Gethsemane recorded in the three other Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and here we have John recording this prayer, which echoes that several days earlier. Now I say that because if you step back from it for a moment, what you have here is a real moment of weakness in the part of the Savior. Not sin, no, not sin at all, but you have a moment of weakness. You have a moment where Jesus is genuinely struggling. Verses 27 and 28, well let me read Verses 20-36 to get the context, but we are focusing on 27 and 28. But I want you to see the circumstances that led up to it.

*John 12:20-36 ~ Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; 21 these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip \*came and \*told Andrew; Andrew and Philip \*came and \*told Jesus. 23 And Jesus \*answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. 26 If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.*

*27 "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both*

*glorified it, and will glorify it again.” 29 So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, “An angel has spoken to Him.” 30 Jesus answered and said, “This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. 31 Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.” 33 But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. 34 The crowd then answered Him, “We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?” 35 So Jesus said to them, “For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. 36 While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light.”*

*These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.*

Let’s pray together.

*Father, we ask that this morning that the light might be among us. We thank You that You have sent Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, into this world, and through Your word You continue to shine His light. We pray this morning that in Your word we might see light, the light of our Savior. And we pray this in His name, Amen.*

Now the prayer of Jesus, why does the Lord include this prayer? And in fact, He punctuates it in an extraordinary way. God Himself punctuates it by speaking in response to the prayer. Out of Heaven, a loud voice out of Heaven, “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” He responds out loud to the prayer of Jesus. There are three times that we have recorded in the New Testament where the Father speaks out of Heaven in an audible voice to the Lord Jesus. The first two that we normally think about are the baptism of Jesus and the transfiguration, where the Father, looking down at His Son as He is baptized says, “***This is My Son, whom I love; with whom I’m well pleased.***” Then at the transfiguration, almost identical wording, with one slight adjustment, He says, “***This is My Son whom I love, with whom I’m well pleased. Listen to Him.***” instructing Peter who was thinking, “Hey, we ought to make a tabernacle for Elijah and Moses.” Remember they are standing with Him. Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, and Peter sort of has an idea, “Well the *Big 3* are here—Moses, Elijah, and Jesus.” And the Father says, “No, there are no *Big 3*, there is only one. Listen to Him.”

Then here we have this third occurrence of the Father speaking out of Heaven. The Son wrestling in His heart before the cross, the shadow of the cross weighing heavy upon Him, and He utters this prayer to which the Father again, when you see these three times it is almost as if the Father can't restrain Himself. Of course, He is God, He is perfect, He is able to do all things, but there is this sense of love, and affirmation He wants to express to His Son. "Father, glorify Thy name." "Son, I have glorified it, and I will glorify it." He answers His prayer, and in doing that, and John including this account, it really spotlights it, highlights it, underlines it, circles the prayer.

It makes it stand out, and as I said earlier, when you step back from it and you think about it, in one sense it is like a man who has been called to go overseas to fight in the United States Army in a conflict. Like when we go into Afghanistan, or Iraq the last few years, we've had a number of people that you know some even from the church through the years who have gone to serve. You can understand apprehension and nervousness, can't you? You say, "Well, I don't want to go," but it is not something you would necessarily share with everyone. I mean, when you really see things biblically, you shouldn't be ashamed of that. You are just acknowledging your humanity, but still it is not our nature to show the weaknesses, so why is this so important to God that He wants it to be seen, and not just seen, but seen with clarity? That is the question.

I'm going to give you kind of a thumbnail answer and we are going to unpack it more as we go forward. I think the reason God wants us to see this prayer of Jesus is first of all to help us understand the awesome work of our Savior. That is that when He came to save us, when God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, fully God from eternity past, the one as the author of Hebrews said earlier when he was telling us about Jesus, "From whom are all things, and for whom are all things," the one that has been with the Father since the beginning, before there was time. God has always been, and He's always been God. He left the glory of Heaven, and He came into this world, and when He came into this world to save sinners, He took upon Himself full humanity.

It wasn't as if He was relying on His deity to overcome the challenges of living life in a fallen world. Like Superman, imagine a track meet. There are a bunch of guys and they are doing the hurdles. Well, Superman decides he is going to compete. So they start off, and you've got even guys like Michael Johnson, do you all remember him? I don't know if he did the hurdles, but if he had done the hurdles he would have been amazing. But you have people like that, you have world-class athletes, but then you've got Superman who just, swish, he flies over all of them.

He doesn't land in between. I don't think that is against the rules. He crossed every hurdle. He wins the gold medal. The life and ministry of Jesus Christ is not like that. He is not drawing on power that He possesses from outside this world. He doesn't cease to be God when He is here. This is the mystery. He continues to be God, He continues to uphold the planets in their orbit, and yet as a man He lives true, human life. He never draws on His deity to make Himself, to make His life easier.

In fact, that's what Satan tries to get Him to do. Remember the first temptation? Jesus had been fasting 40 days, think about the impact of this. Jesus is fasting 40 days, the Spirit leads Him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. He is in a moment of great weakness, I mean in 40 days your body is beginning to now need food, you are going to start dying basically. The process of death is going to begin. What does Satan say to Him? He says, "If You are the Son of God, turn these stones into bread." What did Jesus say? "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." What He is saying is, Satan knows He is God, He does have the power, and he is trying to get Him to use the power to help His human experience. But Jesus, according to Philippians 2, emptied Himself. He lay aside the prerogatives, not the realities of divinity, but the prerogatives of divinity. He doesn't use His powers to make His life easier. He really goes through the ardors of living life in a fallen world, and He does so perfectly so that He can be a perfect and sufficient Savior. This is what we see here. This is why it is here. It is to show us it wasn't easy.

I mean, how could it be easy for someone, and especially knowing as He does, He knows what it is going to cost. He is the author of life. How must it be for the author of life to contemplate death? How must it be for the one, more than that because we could talk about the agony of the cross, the physical agony of the cross is overwhelming. I mean, the cross was invented to make death the most painful and agonizing event that it could possibly ever be, but the real agony for Jesus wasn't the physical agony. The real agony that He anticipated, that troubled His soul, as He says here, "My soul has become troubled." What troubled His soul was the spiritual reality of the cross. It wasn't just the author of life going to experience physical death. It was that, but it was more than that, it was the one who is holy, holy, holy is going to become sin. The one who is too pure to look upon evil is going to be oppressed and overwhelmed, and have evil piled upon Him so that the Father must turn His face away from the Son as He hangs on the cross, as we sung about in the song earlier.

It is that agony that, as He anticipates that, absolutely undoes Him. In fact, the world for troubled in Verse 27 means *'to be agitated'*. It means *'to be thrown into turmoil'*. It really has the force of inner, inward convulsions. You've seen someone have a convulsion perhaps, a horrible thing that is. Imagine inwardly there is a convulsion going on. That is what Jesus is going through, and as He feels the weight of that, the anguish of that, He cries out, ...*what shall I say? 'Father save Me from this hour'?* He wants to say, "Please, save Me from this hour," and He ponders it as a question. *But for this purpose I came to this hour.* In that we see the beauty of His surrender to the Father.

Now what I want us to do in unpacking, that is kind of an overview. Now I want to unpack it a little bit under two points, the prayer of Jesus—the context of the prayer, and the content of the prayer. Because really to see the full weight, it helps us to see it in context, as the context builds in the passage. So the context of the prayer first.

### 1) The Context of the Prayer:

He prays in Verse 27 to Verse 28:

***John 12:27 ~ ...'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify Your name.'***

But when you read it in context, what we see is that, what was it that led to this prayer? It is helpful for us to remember. We read in Verse 20 that there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast. Last time we were looking at that passage, we looked at that issue. Greeks come up to the feast and they make a simple request. Verse 21, ...*"Sir, we wish to see Jesus."* Now we said that the Greeks are Gentiles. They are not Greek-speaking Jews. The word used here is clearly indicative of Gentiles, and the response is clearly indicative of Gentiles. They make a simple request, "We would like to see Jesus." Here Jesus is in holy week, the week between the triumphal entry and the cross, and there are some Greeks who come, and they come to Philip, and then Philip comes to Andrew, and then Philip and Andrew come to Jesus. They say, "Hey, there are some Gentiles who want to see You." What is interesting is we never find out if they got to see Jesus. This is where if you are reading the text, and paying attention to the text, "Wait a minute. What about the Greeks?" Well, what we see is, that in this simple request, we talked about the fact that it is a surprising response. Jesus, when they say to Him, "There are some guys who want to see You, some

Gentiles.” Jesus doesn’t say, “Well, I don’t have time for them right now,” or “Send them in.” He says this, in Verse 23:

***John 12:23 ~ ...“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.***

When He explains what that means to be glorified, of course it means to see the full measure of His worth. That is what glory is. It is the expression of His worth, it is the powerful impact of His attributes. It is to see Him as He is. That is glory. So He is saying, “The Son of Man is about to be seen as He is,” but He is going to talk about the cross. The Greeks come and they want to see Jesus. Well, that apparently in Jesus’ mind, clarifies for Him that the hour has come, and John’s Gospel, throughout His Gospel, Jesus has said a number of different times, uses the word ‘*the hour*’. John 2, when Mary came to Him, remember at the wedding feast and said, “Hey, they are out of wine.” Remember what Jesus said? “Woman, what do I have to do with you? My hour has not yet come.”

In John 4, the woman at the well. Two times he says to the woman at the well, “Woman, I tell you an hour is coming. The hour is coming when you will be true worshippers.” Chapter 7, I think it is Verse 30, and Chapter 8, Verse 20, the Jews are trying to kill Jesus. They want to kill Him, they want to seize Him, but the text says they could not do it because His hour had not yet come. His hour had not yet come. Jesus now suddenly realizes that His hour has come—the hour for His death, the hour for His glorification, the hour of His cross. And as He expresses that, He is really answering their question. “Sirs, can we see Jesus?”

These are Gentiles who are asking that questions. Most of us in this room are Gentiles. Probably 99 out of 100. We were all at one time separate from the Commonwealth of Israel. We were without God, without hope in the world. We were the filthiest of the filthy as far as purity is concerned. We are just like those Greeks. “Sirs, we wish to see Jesus.” Jesus answers their question. “If you want to see Me, what is going to have to happen is I must be lifted up from the earth on the cross. That is the only way that you can come to see Me. That is the only way that you can come into the presence of God.” The Gentiles are coming, it signaled the Father was telling Him, “The time is now.” In fact, this passage really, there are three different events in John 12 that signal the building closeness of the hour.

First, remember, you have in John 12:1-8, the story of Mary anointing Jesus. An incredible picture of worship. What is she doing? Jesus said, “She is anointing Me for burial. My hour is getting close.” Then you have the triumphal entry in Verses 9-19 where the people affirm Him to be the Messiah. They proclaim Him to be the

Messiah, a week later, or less than a week later, they are going to be asking for Him to be crucified, but at this moment God has ordained for Him to be proclaimed as Messiah. His hour is coming. But then when the Gentiles come to Him, God says, “Now it is time. The only way for them to come to us is for You now to go through the hour, the hour of the cross.” Then what He does, as He says this in Verse 23, ... ***“The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.*** Look at the Lord as He expresses His heart. He explains what it means to be glorified.

***John 12:24 ~ Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.***

“If I don’t die, I will remain alone like a grain of wheat, but if I die, I will be able to bring others to Me. I will be able to bring those Greeks to Me. I’ll be able to bring the Jews to Me.” So He basically tells us the path to glory, for Him to be glorified is to go to the cross. That to be exalted, to be lifted up, is to go down. That the way to experience all that God has for Him is to die to Himself. And then in Verses 25 and 26 He basically tells us the pathway to glory for you and me is the same. That if you want to be saved, if you want to go to Heaven, you are going to have to be willing to hate your life because if you love your life, you lose it. If you hate your life in this world, you will keep it alive eternal. You have to be willing to deny yourself. And He says, “If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me. I’m walking this path to the cross. This is the way to glory and if you want to have glory, if you want to go to Heaven, you must follow Me along this path to death.” That is what He is clearly saying.

Now, He is telling us He’s going to die, and He’s overwhelmed by the apprehension of it. He’s telling us we must die, and that is what the Bible really teaches. There is no salvation without repentance. Now salvation is free, it is a gift absolutely, it is obtained by faith, but repentance is a part of it. Repentance is where you turn from living your life for yourself, and you turn in submission to God, and you disown yourself. Like Jesus said, “If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me,” Luke 14. “Deny himself, take up his cross daily,” He says, “and follow Me.” You have to die and keep dying. Now, those are hard words. Conversion is itself an element of death. When a person truly comes to be saved, no matter if they’re a small child or if they’re a hardened old man, when they come to salvation, what has to happen at some level is an awareness of sin that grips them and causes them to want to disassociate themselves from themselves. That’s self-denial.

*I know I'm unfit for God. In fact, I stand with you, Lord, and condemn me. And then when that happens is you look to Christ and you find in Him your righteousness, and you're standing before God's acceptance that is free and eternal. It never will be lost, never can change. Then you live your life. The Christian life is a life of continued death and denial, because if you want to know more of Christ every day, what do you have to do? You've got to die to yourself. I mean, just think about it. It implies in every area. Look at your life the last week. You say, "Well, what were the high points and the low points?" and we sit there and think about our lives the last week. Well, hmm... I lost my temper a few times. I really have a problem with anger, now that I think about it. I need to work on that.*

Well, how do you work on a problem with anger? You come to understand that the reason you're angry is that you think you have some rights that other people are violating, people in your life, circumstances. "I can't believe that person pulled out in front of me. I can't believe that light turned red." Isn't that ridiculous? I'm opening up my own heart here, but that's ridiculous that we think that we are entitled to a green light. We're entitled to hell. That's what I'm entitled to. So I get angry because I think I have rights. Well it's not that I have to learn some better techniques of expressing it. The world says go out and hit something else—express your anger in more constructive ways. That's not what God says. God says, "Die. Die to your rights." The best thing I can realize that can overcome anger is to realize I'm a slave. When I came to Christ, I denied myself and I became a slave. That's the favorite description of all the apostles. "Paul," it says, "a bondservant." They're prettying up the language. It says, "Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ." Jude, James the half brother of Jesus, it doesn't say, "James, the half brother of Jesus." He says, "James, a slave of Jesus Christ." When you come to salvation, you lose yourself, for you have been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:19), therefore glorify God in your body. You're not your own. So it's a matter of remembering that and dying again.

The same thing is true with any other problem "I feel like I'm a failure in this area." Well, the problem is self is getting in the way. What is it that I'm wanting that I'm not getting? That's always the problem. And whenever I bow the knee and say, "What I want more than anything else is to please Jesus Christ," when that happens, victory is won. There are some helpful things that can be added to it, but that's the heart. If you don't get that, you really won't see any progress, any real growth in grace. It's that simple, and yet it's that hard. That's not a feel-good, happy message. You're called to die every day, again, and again, and again.

Tomorrow, what's God's will for you? It's to die. The day after that, what's God's will for you? It's to die to yourself, to your agenda, and to say, "Father, glorify Your Name." It's to say, "Jesus, glorify Your Name." And the more that happens, the irony is the more joy you will have, and the more victory you'll experience, because He says that he who hates his life keeps it, and he who serves Me, the Father honors. God blesses this. Now, I think what's happening here is the Lord is thinking about, "The hour has come, I've got to walk this path that terrifies Me in My humanity, and I want to pray, 'Take this away from Me,' but what I'm going to do is surrender to the Father and trust Him, and say, 'Glorify Your Name,' and I want you to understand that all of you My people whom I'm bringing to Myself in doing this are called to exactly the same pathway on a daily basis, and sometimes it is incredibly difficult."

I mentioned earlier, you think about circumstances that really profoundly impact. Well, things like illnesses of people we love, death of loved ones, sometimes we find ourselves saying things like, "Lord, anything but this." Do you ever find yourself feeling that way? "Lord, it was good that You afflicted me in this way last year with what we went through, but I can't take this," and God's going to call us through moments where we are absolutely at our wits end, where we are utterly overwhelmed, where our soul is troubled like Jesus was. And I believe the reason the Lord put this prayer in there is basically, now as we look at the content of the prayer, the second point, we're going to see the reason He put this prayer in there was to encourage us that we have a Savior who understands. We don't have a Savior who's sitting there saying, "Do what I did," with His arms folded. We have a Savior who actually did what He did so that He could not sit there like that, but so that He could understand and come along and support us in the moment.

Now, that is amazing, and that is the reality of the Gospel and what Jesus Christ has done. That's what He's saying here. That's what the author of Hebrews is celebrating in his epistle. He's celebrating the fact that since the children share in flesh and blood, He partook of the same. He entered into our experience, and He was tempted in every way, so that He could come to the aid of those who are tempted. He went through the anguish that you are going through at some point in your life when you find yourself in utter anguish and no one understands, no one I can related to—don't you feel like that sometimes? "There's nobody I can reach out to that's been through what I've been through." You share something and you're hoping somebody's going to say, "Well, I've been there. Don't worry. God's going to help you through it." Sometimes you get that. Sometimes the Lord gives you those moments, doesn't He? A lot of times He does.

Sometimes have you thrown it out there and they're like, "I don't know what you're talking about"? Or they give kind of a band-aid sort of, feels like a topical, "Just trust the Lord. God is good. I don't really want to get involved with you. I just want to give you something to kind of put you back away from me." We can all do that. We can all be insensitive. We don't want to carry the burden of somebody's pain sometimes, do we? But we're supposed to mourn with those who mourn. We're supposed to come alongside each other and bind up the weak knees, but the most important thing that we can always be doing as we do that is realize that I come alongside you to encourage you and to say, "Though I haven't been exactly where you are, I have been in places similar where I felt in anguish, and I want you to know Jesus, He does understand."

You can never find yourself in an experience that Jesus does not understand personally from experience. That is absolutely true. He has suffered more than you or I will ever suffer in every way that we suffer. He is a well of strength and sufficiency that has been dug down deep, deeper than we ever will go through it. Like Corrie Ten Boom, that wonderful woman, *The Hiding Place* is about her. She lived during WWII in Holland and helped the Jews to escape. Her father and sister were Christians and died in the concentration camps, and she was a Christian. She survived and she said, "I learned that no matter how deep the pit you find yourself in, Jesus is deeper still." This is the salvation that God has made available to us.

## 2) The Content of the Prayer:

You really have in the content of the prayer, a question and a decision. There are two sub-points under the second point of *The Content of the Prayer*. There's a question and there's a decision.

### A) The Question:

The question is: What shall I say? "Father save Me from this hour." Is that what I should say? And the decision is no. "Father, for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your Name. I can't turn away from this hour. You've called Me to this hour. You glorify Your Name." So there's a question and a decision. And the fact that the question is there in the first place is to say He wrestled with it and He understands. Your fears, your anxious moments, when life overwhelms you, you have a Savior that comes in tenderness and empathy. Not just sympathy but empathy, and He came into the world so that He could empathize. That's what he's saying in Hebrews.

I mean, that passage in Hebrews 2, “Since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.” He went through everything He went through so that He could come and be your support. This is so important, because we forget to go to Jesus. Isn’t that crazy? There’s an interesting verse and I remember hearing someone preach on this one time. Alistair Begg actually preached a sermon on 1 Timothy 2 where Paul says to Timothy, a pastor, Paul’s disciple, “Remember Jesus Christ,” and Alistair preached a sermon on that, and he pointed out how it’s amazing how—he was preaching to ministers—how people in ministry can forget Jesus Christ. And Christians, how quickly we forget Jesus Christ. We’re thinking about what we need to do, we’re thinking, “I know I need to get in the word.” We can even be in the word, we can be praying, and we’re forgetting Jesus Christ.

Now, the place you remember Him is in the word. That’s where you’re going to hear from Him is this Book, but you’ve got to come to the Book with the right mentality that says, “Lord, I’m here to meet You. I need You.” That’s what you see with the Psalmists. They’re constantly saying, “Lord, I need You,” and they’re turning to the word. The word is that which brings us into the presence of God. So the question is to tell us He understands. Run to Him, and then as you run to Him, just enjoy the fact that He understands. I mean, this is the nature of who God is. The whole world is lost because they believe a lie about God, and everything in the world is continually lying about God. Satan is lying about God, our sin nature is lying to us about God, and the whole world system lies to us about God, and it essentially says what Satan said in the beginning, “God is not good. God does not care about you.” That’s what he said to Eve, wasn’t it? “The Lord’s holding out on you. If you eat of that tree, He knows you’ll be like Him. He doesn’t want you to be all that you can be.” In other words, “He’s not good.” That’s the message every day that we are surrounded by, but the Bible makes clear again, and again, and again that He is good.

Do you remember the week before last, Ted read Psalm 136. Our normal worship leader, one of our Elders, Kim Pitts, and one of our Deacons, was leading today, and I’m so grateful for Kim, but Ted a couple weeks ago was leading our worship service, and he read Psalm 136. I read it just yesterday again myself as I’m working through the Psalms, and it’s the verse where it says, “Praise the Lord. His lovingkindness is everlasting.” There are like 35 verses, and there was one clause, “Praise the Lord. His lovingkindness is everlasting. He delivered His people from Egypt. His lovingkindness is everlasting. He led them through the Red Sea. His lovingkindness is everlasting.” It’s the refrain over, and over, and over again, and when you read it, it’s kind of tempting to say, “Lord, this is a little bit irritating.”

I had to deal with that when I was reading that. I was like, I'm having trouble keeping the train of thought, and then the Lord graciously reminded me, "The train of thought is My lovingkindness is everlasting, and I know you doubt it so much that you need it hammered home like blows of a hammer driving in a nail. What do you know about Me? My lovingkindness is everlasting. My lovingkindness is everlasting." His lovingkindness, the Hebrew word is  $\text{רַחֲמֵי}$  (cheched). Sometimes it's talking about His covenant faithfulness. It relates to His covenant, but it's really love, and I think lovingkindness is an excellent translation. It's His love and His kindness together. It's also got an element of mercy to it, because what it is, is God in His greatness sees someone in misery and weakness, and His lovingkindness is His desire to move toward the miserable and alleviate his suffering.

Remember, all our suffering, all of our misery is self-inflicted. It's all self-inflicted, really. I mean, either our ancestors or us, man. And so He looks at me in my misery, He looks at you in your misery, and His heart is to move toward us. And so what we have to remember is we've got all these lies. "God's not good. He's angry." Well, He is angry with those who reject Him and rebel against Him, and those who won't come to Him through faith in Christ. Yes, He's angry, but He's made a way for you to come into His lovingkindness, which is everlasting, and what we have to remember is who He is, and to show you that His lovingkindness is everlasting, what is greater proof of that than the cross of Jesus Christ? That He came into this world, lived a life of true humanity where He actually was in anguish over going to the cross, and yet He walked in obedience through all of that agony. He did that, God dying, and you wonder, "Is He good?"

So what we have to learn to do is not listen to our flesh, not listen to the world and what it says about Him, not listen to Satan who lies about Him, but believe what He says, His own self-revelation. He has made Himself known. From beginning to end, He says, "My lovingkindness is everlasting." That passage I mentioned so often that I come back to, Exodus 34:7-8, is one that you ought to make sure you're aware of and you understand, because it is one of the high water marks in the Old Testament. Moses says, "Show me Your glory." "Well, Moses, you've already seen a lot of glory, haven't you? I mean, you saw all kinds of miracles. You saw the Red Sea, you saw water come from the rock, you saw manna come from heaven—what do you need to see, Moses?" Well, God loves that kind of heart. Moses says, "Show me Your glory," and God says, "I will show you My glory. Tomorrow I'll show you My glory. I'm going to put you in the cleft of the rock. You can't see My face, but I'll let you see the back parts," and Moses sees the train of God's robe, but what he sees of glory is not what he sees, but what he hears, and this is taking his understanding of who God is to a whole new level.

God's not just a miracle worker who destroyed the Egyptians. God's much better than that. This is what Moses hears. "Jehovah, Jehovah-God" or "Yahweh, Yahweh God, My Name, Yahweh, Yahweh." The Lord, the Lord, is how it's translated. "The Lord, the Lord, compassionate and gracious."

Now, this is only days after the golden calf when God's wrath was rightly exercised. Remember how many people God killed in the wake of the golden calf and it was right that He did so, but He says, "I want you to understand. Let Me tell you how I really am in My heart."

*Exodus 34:6 ~ ..."The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;..."*

He's overflowing in lovingkindness and truth, and then He says:

*Exodus 34:7 ~ who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished,...*

What does God say about who He is? What is God's self-revelation? He says, "I am kind, I am loving, come to Me," and the cross is the ultimate validation of that, isn't it? Look what God is like. Look how approachable God is. I love as you read through the Scriptures, especially the Psalms, you see again and again they talk about God's our refuge, and He's the one that inspired those words. What He's saying is, "I want you to see Me as your refuge, and everyone who sees Me as their refuge, I will receive with lovingkindness." So no matter what your circumstance is, the answer is to run to God. And Jesus is showing that in that He understands. He's saying, "When you're suffering, when you're needing to die in some area, when you're needing to find the strength to die, first of all, realize that I understand and I'm willing to come to you, so seek My face."

*Lord Jesus, I need You right now. I'm dealing with this circumstance and I know I'm angry because I think I have rights that have been violated, and I think I have a good case, but I know I'm not supposed to be doing this. Thank You that You understand what it's like to feel wronged. Thank You that You understand what it's like to wrestle against sin. Though You've never sinned, You've been tempted in every way.*

Not only does He understand, but He's overcome. That's the second sub-point. *The Content of the Prayer: The Question*, and now:

## B) The Decision:

The decision is He overcomes. He overcame and He overcomes. So when you come to Jesus as your help, as your support, what you find is in looking at Him, you will find from Him strength to overcome. You look at Christ and you look at what He's done for you, you look at the fact that He said yes to the Father when the Father said, "Go to the cross," and He kept saying, "Yes, Father. Yes, Father. Yes, Father." And He did it not only out of obedience to the Father, but He did it out of love for you, and now when He says to you, "You, go to the cross," what do you know? "If You loved me that much, it must be good. If You loved me that much, it must be best. I trust You. You've proved Your love."

So when you look at Christ, then no matter what the circumstance is, you find the victory. He's the one who understands. He's the one who overcomes, and in those moments, the moment of death, the moments when we find ourselves weeping over our sinfulness and realizing that we have a Savior who's not rejecting us as we wrestle with these things and turmoil that sin brings, and the desires that we have in our hearts, but we have a Savior who comes to us to support us, who's already paid for that sin, who's already given us that righteousness, who is there to give us His power now to overcome it, when we find ourselves in worshiping Him, our hearts are filled up. We thought we were losing everything. Sometimes it feels like you're losing everything.

In fact, when you really have a moment like that, it does feel like I'm laying down everything. I can't do it. I can't lay this down. But when you lay it down and you do it in the presence of Christ, you find that you haven't lost anything. You've gained everything to such a point that your heart can't even take it. Have you found yourself in that position? The way to find yourself in that position if it's been a long time is to lay it down and to die. And when you lay it down and you die, when you obey Him like Jesus says in John 14, "Abide in Me, for apart from Me you can do nothing. Abide in Me. Keep My commandments. The one who abides in Me, the one who keeps My commandments, My Father and I will come to him and make Our abode with him," when you and I submit to Christ, the Trinity comes down and just camps out with us. It's the pathway of suffering, it's the pathway of death, and it's the pathway of victory, and joy, and eternal blessing and bliss forever. It's the well-worn pathway that we can follow. We can follow His bloodstained footprints all the way. What a marvelous Savior.

Let's go to Him in prayer...

*Our Father, we praise and honor Your great Name. We marvel that You are continually leading the writers of Scripture to see in You Your compassion, Your lovingkindness, Your graciousness, and Your amazing love. Father, forgive us for our unbelief. There are some in this room who are hardened in unbelief or who have not been willing to repent and believe. They've heard things about Your compassion today, they've heard things about Your goodness before, but they have not been able to believe and trust. May Your love break the hardness of their hearts and grant them grace to repent and to find in You everything they long for. Lord Jesus, You are everything we need. You are our bread. You're the bread of heaven. You're the Light of the world. Help them to reach out to You right now and to be saved.*

*Father, for those of us who are Your people, we acknowledge how easy we find it to forget Jesus Christ. Lord, it's such a terrible and wicked thing, but we find ourselves wandering again, and again, and again, even thinking we're not wandering but we're wandering. We wonder why we're not making progress and it's because we're living our lives for ourselves. We're not dying to self. How grateful we are, though, that a God who calls us to die to self is a God who calls us to do that through the love that He has shed. The love of Christ is that which compels us, constrains us, that we who live ought no longer live for ourselves, but for Him who loved us and gave Himself for us. May we be people who this week are more joyful in our surrender, more earnest in seeking Your face, and a greater testimony to a dark world, of the light and glory of Your goodness, and we pray this in Jesus' wonderful Name, Amen.*

This audio presentation, description, and transcription by Providence Church in Duluth, Georgia, USA, is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 License.

 Except where otherwise noted, this work is licensed under <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

Attribution:

Based on work at Providence Church, Duluth, GA, USA and found online at <http://www.providenceduluth.org>. Permission for use beyond the scope of this license may be requested by contacting Providence Church, Duluth, GA through their website.