

The High Priestly Prayer – For Whom Did Jesus Pray?
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John 17:1-26
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Please turn with me in your Bibles to John 17. This is our third message actually in this chapter, The High Priestly Prayer of Jesus. Three weeks ago we began asking some questions, some of the W's, and an H. The five W's and an H, I use in outlining a sermon to help us observe the text. You know, the five W's and an H are the questions *Who? When? What? Where? Why? How?* And so we looked at three of those three weeks ago, and we're going to look at another one this morning, and just to tell you which that is. The title of the message this morning is 'The High Priestly Prayer – For Whom Did Jesus Pray?' We noted earlier that it is called The High Priestly Prayer, probably in most of your Bibles you have that title above Verse 1 of Chapter 17. It has been seen as that by the followers of Jesus Christ through the years because we realize that He was praying right before He made the offering on the true Day of Atonement, the day of the cross, the day to which all Scripture pointed, the most momentous day in all eternity. So 'The High Priestly Prayer – For Whom Did Jesus Pray?'

One of the things that is really striking as you read the prayer carefully is to note exactly who or for whom He prays. It jumps off the page at you if you look at it carefully, and the question is: *Who is on the heart of the Savior as He prepares to make atonement? Who is on the heart of the Savior as He draws near to the cross?* What we are going to see is that Jesus, as He prays, does not pray for the world, He prays for a select group of people—the elect, or those who will believe. This is somewhat disruptive to our normal way of thinking, and so we come this morning to really the theme of the message, we're going to see one of the themes of the message is the Doctrine of Limited Atonement. It is one of the deeper more mysterious doctrines in Scripture, and it is a major subject of the sermon this morning. The Doctrine of Limited Atonement deals with the extent of the atonement, and it essentially asks this question, this is what the Doctrine of Limited Atonement asks—*For whom did Christ die?* Was His blood shed for all men in the same way? Or is there a sense in which His death was a payment for those who would be saved? For the elect? Is His atonement limited in scope and focus? Not in power, but in the sense of breadth, or width?

Now this is a difficult doctrine, and let me mention three, I want to make three preliminary observations before we get into the outline, okay? Three preliminary observations, or encouragements, exhortations to us this morning. The first is this:



This issue is raised by the text. I didn't wake up this morning, or spend time this week studying and think, "I want to preach a sermon on Limited Atonement." It is sometimes appropriate to work through topical messages like that, but normally I would do the other doctrines as well, not start on Limited Atonement. But the issue is raised by the text because it is striking to note that Jesus prays specifically, not for the world. You are going to read that, you are going to see that as we read. So if it is raised by the text, it deserves our full attention. This is one of the benefits of expositional preaching, you are forced to deal with the issues the text deals with. You can't just skip over them. I mean, I guess you can, but you ought not.

It is raised by the text, that is the first preliminary observation. The second is: That this is a mysterious doctrine, it is a difficult doctrine. It is one of the more difficult doctrines in Scripture, and therefore, it requires determined effort and hard work to understand rightly. This isn't light stuff. You have to work at it. And this is just the way it is with the Lord. I mean, the more wonderful truths of the Gospel are not the easiest truths. Spurgeon used the analogy that when God put diamonds and rubies in the earth, or on the earth, He didn't put them on top of the surface. You don't go around finding diamonds and rubies. What do you have to do? You have to dig for them. You dig for treasure. So it is incumbent upon us to be willing to dig, and so this subject is going to require some mental digging. We have to be determined to look at all of Scripture, not just selected verses. We're going to look at this passage, and we're going to try to consider it in light of all the others as well.

Thirdly, not only does it require hard work, the third observation is that it requires humility to deal with the deeper mysteries of Scripture, these things that are strictly speaking, antinomies, because we are dealing here with the sovereignty of God in salvation, something the Bible clearly teaches. And also, the full responsibility of people to respond to the Gospel, which the Bible also teaches. It teaches human responsibility, and it teaches divine sovereignty, things which at first glance are apparently contradictory. I said apparently because to us it looks contradictory, but it is not contradictory in the mind of God.

That is one of the things, actually, that people go astray, and so many heresies come out of man trying to make the teachings of the Bible fit our predetermined sort of thought forms. Weeding out stuff we don't like, and making it, bending it, and twisting it to fit into the box we want. But the faithful Christian is someone who is going to continue in the word. Remember John 8:31, Jesus says, there were many who believed in Him, and it goes on in John 8:31 to say to those who believed in Him, He said, "If you continue in My word, then truly are you My disciples, and you'll know the truth, and the truth will make you free. If you

continue in Me, even though it is difficult, then you are going to show yourself truly to be My disciple, and you are going to be free.”

This issue of divine sovereignty and human responsibility, that seem at points to be contradictory, are not contradictory, they are complimentary. And there is a sense in which, it is actually the most logical thing in the world that human logic would not be able to fully plumb the depths of all of who God is. Isn't that the most logical thing actually? That we cannot make sense of all of it to our liking? Because who are we considering? We are considering the eternal God who fills the Heavens. I mean, the nations are a drop in the bucket compared to Him. What are we? One person. So it is not surprising that we would come up against things that are hard for us, and I will just say at the beginning, I think that as you look at all of Scripture, there are complimentary teachings that may at times seem to be set against one another.

For instance, we are going to see here that it appears that Jesus is saying that He died to pay the purchase price for the elect, and yet, John 3:16 also says that when God gave His Son, He gave Him for the world. But here Jesus is not praying for the world, He is praying for those the Father has given Him. So I will say that there is some sense in which that the death of Christ benefits all, and makes salvation available in one sense to all, because God truly, the offer of the Gospel is genuine. God invites everyone to be saved. The reality is that apart from His saving and electing work, nobody would say, “Yes.” That is the problem. We all run away from God, and so God must give a new heart to someone through His sovereign work, and then when they have a new heart, they find in themselves, they have eyes to see, or ears to hear. Remember how Jesus would say that when He was teaching? He's giving parables and He says, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” He says, “Not all of you have ears to hear. Not all of you have eyes to see.” When He says, “Who do men say that I am?” And they say, “Some say You are Elijah, some say You are a prophet.” “But who do you say that I am?” Remember what Simon Peter says? “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” What does Jesus say? ***“Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.*** What He is saying is, “Listen, My Father has given you eyes to see and ears to hear.” Your testimony, your response to the Gospel is the outward evidence of the inward work of God. So when we come to this we come to something that is veiled in mystery and requires humility. There is a sense in which we should take off our shoes always to read the Bible, but especially when we come to the more difficult doctrines. We are on holy ground, and the requirement of a true disciple of Jesus is a humility, and submissiveness, and willingness to accept whatever we find in Scripture.

Listen, I want to tell you right up front, some of you have been here long enough you have heard me say this a number of times, and I apologize for those of you who have been here through the years. I apologize that you had to be here all this time, but the Doctrines of Grace, what are sometimes called The Five Points of Calvinism, of which Limited Atonement is one, the acronym TULIP, remember? T-U-L-I-P, that is Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, Perseverance of the Saints. These five doctrines we believe are the teaching of the Bible about salvation, that man truly is totally depraved. That is, he is not as bad as he could be, but sin has affected every part of his being. The mind is darkened, the affections are alienated. He doesn't have a taste for God. He can't think straight about God. His will is bound. He is a slave to sin. That is what Jesus says in John 8:31 and following, "Everyone who sins is a slave of sin, you are a slave. You need to be set free."

Unconditional election is the fact that God chooses some, the Doctrine of the Election is a doctrine that is clear in the Bible. You can't ignore it. You have to find a way of understanding it. One hundred fifty times, if you add up all of the times that it says '*chose*', '*chosen*', '*choose*', '*elect*'. From the Old Testament through the New Testament, 150 times, it is there. So the basis is on what basis does God choose some to be saved? And the idea is when you look at the Scripture, it seems that there is no condition in the person that is chosen, it is God's free and sovereign choice, His electing purpose. Romans 9 makes this painfully clear. I say painfully clear because, back to where I started to go a minute ago, the thing I told so many of you many times before is for me, this was hard stuff.

When I went to seminary, and I went to a seminary that taught this, because I was trying to go to a seminary that taught the Bible to be the word of God, and when I was going in 1988, when Patti and I were looking for schools, all of the Southern Baptist seminaries were liberal. All of them, bigtime liberal. They didn't believe that the Bible is the word of God. So I went to a Presbyterian seminary, and I knew what I was getting into at some point, and I couldn't believe. I thought, "I've read these guys, J.I. Packer," and I had read R.C. Sproul, and I was very impressed with the way they handled the word of God, and there was a quality about the way they taught that I hadn't been exposed to.

So when it came time to go to seminary, I heard about RTS, and I had visited, and I went, and I knew they were Calvinists. They believed in this TULIP. It sounds funny to say it that way, but they believed in the Doctrines of Grace. I went there,

and you know, I remember asking the president of the seminary, when Patti and I were meeting with him, I said, “Listen, how do you explain reformed theology?” That sounded kind of funny to me in the first place, reformed theology. It sounded like you have reformed theology if you are a theologian who got in trouble. You had to go to reform school. I didn’t say that to the president, but I said, “What is reformed? What does it mean?” And he said, “Well, listen, the essence of the reformation,” he talked a little bit about the Doctrines of Grace, but he said, “Really the essence of the reformation, the Protestant reformation,” that’s what we mean by reformed, “theology that flows out of the Protestant reformation was the recovery of this single idea that Scripture alone is authoritative in the life of the people of God. That it doesn’t matter how we feel about it, what we would like to be so, but it is what does God say in His word?” And he gave the motto ‘*semper reformanda*’.

Remember ‘*semper fi*’ means ‘*always faithful*’, the marine motto ‘*semper fi*’? ‘*Semper*’ means ‘*always*’, ‘*reformanda*’, ‘*always reforming*’, and the idea is you are always reforming your doctrine in light of the teaching of Scripture. The Christian is one who is called to continually bow the knee to the word of God and there are often things that we come to that we don’t like at first. We wonder, “Why is it this way?” And is it surprising that it would be that way? What is really ridiculous is for us to think that our taste should govern what God is, and what He is like. That is absurdly ridiculous. For me, I went to seminary, and I’ve shared that Patti became a Calvinist in maybe, she said like three months, I think it was three weeks. It took me three and a half years and I was studying full-time. I was hardheaded, so wherever you are, I’m not going to be one to cast any stones at anybody who, you know, “One message on Limited Atonement, I’m sold.” I’m not expecting that because it took me a lot longer than that. If you come along, I’ll be impressed. You will be in the club that my wife is in, the ‘*Quickly-Illumined Club*’, or something, I don’t know. But I thought to myself, “I want to be sure that the word of God says it.”

But a key moment in my life though, was when I was actually studying through the book of Romans in our class on the Pauline Epistles, and I was working through Romans 5, and the passage in Romans 5:12-21, where he is telling us the reason that we’re saved by grace, the reason that we’re saved by grace, and justified by the work of Christ, and he makes an analogy. He says, “In the same way we were all condemned by the act of one man,” this is the analogy, you read it, and check it out. This is the argument Paul is making in Romans 5. “The reason you know that you are saved by one man’s act of righteousness, that is the life of Christ, the atoning death of Jesus Christ, the reason you know you are saved by that one act is



because you were condemned by one man's act—Adam's sin. When he sinned, death spread to all men, and condemnation came to all men." I remember reading that, and thinking to myself, "This is not fair." That's what I thought. "I think that as an American, that seems like the right thing. Why would we be condemned for Adam's sin?" But this was the question I think the Lord put in my mind immediately, as soon as I said that, "This is not fair," this was the question: "Who are you to determine what is fair?" And that hit me like a ton of bricks. Wow! Who am I to decide what is fair? Why would I think that somebody born in 1964, in Atlanta, Georgia, who at that point was 24 years old, that I could possibly tell God what ought to be? And so I made a determination that day, "Lord, I will believe whatever Your word says. I want to believe it, and follow it, and submit to it." It only took me three more years to become a Calvinist after that, but that was the turning point.

Now, this has been a long introduction. Let's read the text of Scripture, and what I want you to look at, for whom did Christ die? The three points we're going to look at are going to be: *For whom did Christ pray? For whom did Christ die? And how should this impact our lives?* And look with me at John 17, and listen to His prayer.

John 17:1-26 ~ Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, 2 even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. 3 This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. 4 I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. 5 Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

6 "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. 7 Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; 8 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. 9 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; 10 and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11 I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father,

keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. 12 While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

13 But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. 14 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

20 “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

22 The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

25 “O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; 26 and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

Let's pray.

Father, we ask that You might send forth Your light, and Your truth, and You might lead us to Your holy hill, to the place of Your habitation. And we pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.



So the three points: *For whom did Christ pray? For whom did Christ die, and then how? So Whom? Whom? and How?*

1) For Whom Did Christ Pray?

It's very clear, Verse 9, negatively, He says, ***...I do not ask on behalf of the world...*** He says, Verse 9, ***...I ask on their behalf;***... speaking of the people He has been talking about before Verse 9, in Verses 6-8 He is talking about ***...to the men whom You gave Me out of the world;***... Verse 6. In Verse 9 He says, ***...I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world...*** In fact, the word order here is emphatic to say, "I'm not asking on behalf of the world." In the Greek it reads like this: "I ask on their behalf, on behalf of the world I do not ask," so it puts the world up front to emphasize, "I'm not asking on behalf of the world." But then He states it positively again at the end of that, ***...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;*** Clearly the disciples are first in Jesus' view. He is praying for the 11 first.

Two times in Verse 6 He speaks of the Father giving them to Him. What's really happening is the Lord is praying for those whom the Father has given Him. There are certain men that the Father has given Him. Look with me at Verse 6:

John 17:6 ~ "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world;

Well, didn't Jesus choose His disciples? Yes, but He chose the ones the Father gave Him.

John 17:6 ~ ...they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.

So twice it says in Verse 6 that the Father gave them to Him. Do you see that? ***...the men whom You gave Me out of the world;***... ***...they were Yours and You gave them to Me,***... Then in Verse 9, the Verse we read a moment ago:

John 17:9 ~ I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me;

Look at Verse 20. It's not just the disciples He's praying for.

John 17:20 ~ "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

He's looking at the disciples, He's praying for the disciples, and He's praying for all who will believe through the disciples' word. Beyond the disciples He's looking, and He says in Verse 24:

John 17:24 ~ Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me,...

There He's talking about those who will believe. He's talking about us. We believe through the apostles' word. If you are saved today, you have come to faith through the word of these eleven, and you are a child of God because Jesus prayed for you on the night before He was crucified. You were on His heart. He has a laser-like focus on those who belong to Him. In fact, we saw this at the very beginning of His prayer. Look at Verse 2 of John 17. After He says:

John 17:1 ~ "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, 2 even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.

Do you see that? Who does the Son give eternal life to? Those whom the Father has given Him. So He's not praying for the world. He's praying for the disciples and for all who will believe through Him, a specified, predetermined group belonging to the Father, given to the Son. That's the picture here. It's a beautiful picture. The Father has chosen people out of the world for His own, and He gives them to the Son as a love gift. That's what we have here. So for whom did Christ pray? He prayed for those who would believe. He prayed for the ones the Father gave Him. He prayed for the elect. So that brings us to the second question.

2) For Whom Did Christ Die?

When we consider those He prayed for, in light of the immediate context, it becomes clear that His praying for *these* as He's about to enter into the true holy place to offer His blood, who's on His heart? The elect. He's about to offer Himself as a sacrifice, as an atoning sacrifice, as an atonement for sins. And as He does that, who is He bearing to the Father in prayer? He's bearing those whom the Father has given Him. You see this idea of the Father giving Him a select group, in John 10 as well. It's important to interpret things in context.

Let's look at the rest of John here for a moment, a few places in John. In John 10:11, we see this idea of limited atonement. Let me just say too, a better label for limited atonement, I think, is particular redemption, the doctrine of particular redemption. That is, the question is, when Jesus redeemed, did He pay a

redemption price, the price to buy back slaves, did He pay a general redemption price for all people, or did He pay a particular redemption price for a particular group of people? That's the question. The doctrine of limited atonement or particular redemption says that He had in some way—even though the death of Christ in some sense has benefits for all, that it had saving benefits for a particular group. Sometimes theologians say this—they say that the atonement is limited, but it's not limited the way we think of limited, like it's somehow not powerful. No the atonement is sufficient for all, efficient for the elect. So then the offer of the Gospel goes out to all people. We're to call everyone to repent and believe, even though again, this seems at first counterintuitive. If the Lord knows who's saved, we just need to see if we can find the mark on them, and then we go talk to them. No, Jesus says, "Preach the Gospel to every creature." Jesus says, "Call everyone to repent and believe. Invite all people to come to My saving work and experience eternal life." But what we see in John 10:11, Jesus says:

John 10:11 ~ "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.

Look at Verse 14:

John 10:14 ~ I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, 15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

Who does He lay down His life for? The sheep, right? Look at Verse 16. This sounds just like John 17.

John 10:16 ~ I have other sheep, which are not of this fold;

He's talking about you and me. See, He's talking to the Jews, and He's talking about the Jewish sheep that He's saving, "And let Me tell you, I've got other sheep that are not of this fold," probably almost every one of us. Maybe just a few have any kind of Jewish roots, in this room. Most of us are Gentiles who were far away from God, and this is who Jesus was talking about.

John 10:15 ~ I lay down My life for the sheep.

John 10:16 ~ I have other sheep, which are not of this fold;

Now, He says this, and then in the next section here in John 10:22, He at the Feast of Dedication. It was winter. Jesus is walking in the portico, and the Jews gather around Him, and they say:

John 10:24 ~ “How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.” 25 Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these testify of Me. 26 But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. 27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;

Who does He lay down His life for? The sheep. But the problem with the unbelievers is they’re not of His sheep. Do you see that? So He lays down His life for those who are His sheep. And who are His sheep? Look at Verse 29:

John 10:29 ~ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all;

“My sheep are the ones He’s given to Me.” Do you see that again? You can turn back to John 6:37.

John 6:37 ~ All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. 39 This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

You see this in other places, in Acts 20:28, this idea that Jesus died in some way savingly for the elect, that the elect were His focus, that those who would come to believe, were His focus. In Acts 20:28, Paul says:

Acts 20:28 ~ ...to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Who was the redemption price paid for? The church. He purchased the church with His own blood. Or Ephesians 5:25...

Ephesians 5:25 ~ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,...

Back to Leviticus, though, Leviticus 16 that we looked at earlier, the Day of Redemption. Who was the high priest representing when he went in behind the

veil? It's really emphatic that he wasn't representing the world. He was offering the sacrifice for the sons of Israel.

Leviticus 16:15 ~ "Then he shall slaughter the goat of the sin offering which is for the people,..."

Verse 16:

Leviticus 16:16 ~ He shall make atonement for the holy place, because of the impurities of the sons of Israel and because of their transgressions in regard to all their sins; ...

At the end of Verse 17:

Leviticus 16:17 ~ he may make atonement for himself and for his household and for all the assembly of Israel.

In Verse 21, when he confesses over the sins of the live goat, what does he do?

Leviticus 16:21 ~ ...and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins;

Verse 22:

Leviticus 16:22 ~ The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land;

Not the iniquities of the whole world, but the iniquities of the sons of Israel. It's interesting too, you see this—in fact, just turn over to Exodus 28 for a moment. When you look back at the Old Testament, with the reference point of Calvary, it's amazing how rich all of the Old Testament becomes. You see how He was laying down the groundwork to help us be prepared for Christ. This is why Jesus could say, "You have Moses, and you don't recognize Me? I'm the fulfillment of everything Moses told you." In Exodus 28 and 37, actually, you have instructions about the garments for the priests, in particular the high priest. It's interesting how emphatic Exodus is. Basically this is the way it works.

God says, "Listen, I want you to build the tabernacle, and do this..." Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. "I want you to choose a priest, and they need to be like this..." Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. "I want you to do their garments,

and they should be like this.” And then what He does after telling you all of that, He then tells you what Moses did, blow by blow, repeating exactly what He said just chapters ago. He could have said, “Moses did all that God said,” and could have saved like five chapters. He didn’t do that. He goes back through the garments of the high priest. “This is exactly what they did. They made it just like...” And it’s to show He did exactly what God did, but it’s also to reinforce, what’s the garment of the high priest? Well, in Chapter 28, you have it introduced in the garments of the priest, and in Verse 15, He says:

Exodus 28:15 ~ “You shall make a breastpiece of judgment, the work of a skillful workman; like the work of the ephod you shall make it: ...

He said, “You make a breastplate,” and in Verse 17:

Exodus 28:17 ~ You shall mount on it four rows of stones; the first row shall be a row of ruby, topaz and emerald; 18 and the second row a turquoise, a sapphire and a diamond; 19 and the third row a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst; 20 and the fourth row a beryl and an onyx and a jasper; ...

In Verse 21:

Exodus 28:21 ~ The stones shall be according to the names of the sons of Israel: twelve, according to their names; they shall be like the engravings of a seal, each according to his name for the twelve tribes.

So the high priest when he would get his garments on, he has this breastplate that has twelve stones, and each of the twelve tribes are engraved on him. And look what it says in Verse 29:

Exodus 28:29 ~ Aaron shall carry the names of the sons of Israel in the breastpiece of judgment over his heart when he enters the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually.

Do you see that? When he came in, what does he carry over his heart? He carries over it the names of the twelve tribes, the true names of the people of God. What did Jesus do when He as High Priest entered to make atonement? What did He carry on His heart? We have it in the high-priestly prayer in John 17. He’s carrying

the names of the people of God, not the people of the world. He's carrying the names of everyone who will ever believe from all the tribes of the earth. That's what He's doing when He enters behind the veil as the High Priest, the true veil in Heaven. So for whom did Christ die? He died for the elect savingly. His death is sufficient for all, efficient for the elect. Now the third question:

3) How Should This Impact Our Lives?

What difference does this make? There are three things I want to share. First, it should give us great confidence in evangelism—confidence, boldness, and tenacity in evangelism. It's counterintuitive, because you, like me probably, maybe not, but many people when they think about—if God's sovereign in salvation, what difference does it make whether I share? He's going to save who He's going to save. That's how we would think, and we would think, and we would be wrong, because God commands us to go, and He uses the instrument. He even uses our prayers. We have to pray. You have not because you ask not. "God already knows. Why pray?" Because He has told us to pray, and He uses our prayers to accomplish His work. The prayers of a righteous man avail much. Confidence in evangelism.

You can look this up in Acts 18:5-11. The apostle Paul is in Corinth. He's preaching as he always did. He would go to the Jewish synagogue first. He's preaching in the Jewish synagogue that Jesus is the Christ. And there in Corinth, which is now in modern day Greece, he is preaching, and they listen to him for a while, and finally they've had enough and they reject him, and only a few guys believe in Jesus as the Messiah. They become threatening to him, menacing to him. He often had the case of people who were coming after him trying to kill him. He was attacked several times, stoned, beaten. Well, in Acts 18:9, Jesus comes to him at night and says, "Listen, Paul, I want you to continue preaching boldly in this city, because I have many people here." What's He saying? He's saying that "Many that the Father has given Me, that belong to Me, are in this city. There are a lot of people that He has not given to Me. There are a lot of people of the world that I was talking about when I told John and the eleven that the world is going to hate you, and they're going to come against you. But let me tell you something, Paul. Keep preaching, because there are many that I'm going to use you to call from death to life. I'm going to give you the opportunity to be the mouthpiece that will speak the Shepherd's voice, and when they hear you speak, they won't hear Paul speaking, (or they won't hear you or me speaking), but they will hear Jesus the Shepherd calling." That's what's going to happen, and so it gives you great confidence to keep on keeping on.

A great example of this is the father of the modern missionary movement, William Carey. William Carey was a Baptist Calvinist who started the modern missionary movement. Again, that doesn't sound right either, does it? Because you'll hear people that are non-Calvinists say Calvinism is this terrible evil and all this, and it's going to kill evangelism and all this kind of thing, and they're just wrong. They're misinformed. William Carey went from England to India and started the modern missionary movement, and he persisted because of his doctrine, in preaching the Gospel. He was there for seven years. He went through all kinds of hardship. They lost three children, he and his wife. They had opposition continually. He was preaching in a place where it was so dark spiritually. I mean, the caste system that Hinduism gives us, why are Americans infatuated with Hinduism and Eastern religion? Eastern religion gives the caste system. That's the evil of Eastern religion. Not only that, they offered babies, sacrifices, in the areas he was. And when the man died, they burned his wife alive on the funeral pyre. That was the common practice of the day. In that kind of environment it's so dark that it takes a while. William Carey preached the Gospel for seven years before he saw his first convert, but by the time he died, India had been radically impacted with the Gospel. In fact, they had outlawed the burning of widows on the funeral pyre. Even the unbelievers were blessed by the presence and power of the Gospel. But he had the courage to do it because he believed in the sovereignty of God.

A great book that helps answer this question is J. I. Packer's book *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, and he shows how a right view of the sovereignty of God empowers evangelism, motivates evangelism. So the first implication is we should have more confidence in evangelism. The second is there should be more humility before others, and in particular when we're sharing, but just in relation to anyone. I mean, the fact that we understand that if we have eyes to see and ears to hear, it's because the Father chose us before the foundation of the world. In Ephesians 1:4, that's what it says. We were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. The Father chose us. He gave us to the Son, and the Son has given us eternal life. What did we do? We did nothing except have our hearts changed, and once we had our hearts changed, we responded to the Gospel by repenting and believing. So proud Christian ought to be an oxymoron, but proud Calvinist certainly ought to be. We should be humble. What do we have that we did not receive? And there ought to be a lowness about our relationships with other people. We can sympathize and be empathetic because we know we would be right there.

The final thing is security in His love. Confidence in evangelism, humility before men, and then security in His love. The wonder of knowing that God has loved me like this gives me security in my salvation, and it should do the same for you. Back to John 17, He says in Verse 6:

John 17:6 ... they were Yours and You gave them to Me...

Verse 9:

John 17:9 ~ those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours;

The picture really is that the Father, He's invited all people to be saved, but nobody would have come, and knowing that, before the foundation of the world, He chose to savingly work in the hearts of His people that He would choose for Himself, not based on anything that they do, and He chose to bring them to Himself, and He selected them out, and He gave them to His Son. And look how much the Father loves the Son. Verse 24, when He asks:

John 17:24 ~ Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

“Father, You loved Me before the foundation of the world. I loved You before the foundation of the world. And You as an expression of Your love have given Me a bride. You've chosen out for Me a bride, and You've sent Me into the world to purchase My bride, those that You've given Me.” The wonder of it, that you belong to God, that He chose you, and He's given you to His Son. And so it's all what He's doing.

Now, there are balancing exhortations that say, “Repent and believe. Keep on holding fast to your confession. Walk in the Spirit so that you don't carry out the desires of the flesh. Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” There are all these balancing things, but the undergirding reality is it's the work of God in you. That's why you can work out your salvation with fear and trembling, Paul says in Ephesians 2, for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to do His good pleasure. This is the balance, and when you realize that for whatever reason, the Father thought that you were a wonderful gift to give to His Son, isn't that just amazing? And the Son was thrilled to receive you, and He prays at the end of that chapter, “You loved Me before the foundation of the world. I want them to have the love that You have given to Me. I want them to be filled up with all the love that We have.” That's the wonder of what it means to be a child of God. And these things that unsettle us at first, if we continue there, continue in the word, continue looking, continue searching, continue working

through the Scriptures, we will find the truth, and we will find the wonder of His love.

I love the words of the wonderful hymn that we sing from time to time, *How Sweet and Awful is the Place*. We'll close with these words. Isaac Watts wrote:

*How sweet and awful is the place
With Christ within the doors
While everlasting love displays
The choicest of her stores*

*While all our hearts and all our songs
Join to admire the feast
Each of us cry with thankful tongues
Lord, why was I a guest?*

*Why was I made to hear Thy voice
And enter while there's room
When thousands make a wretched choice
And rather starve than come?*

*'Twas the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly drew us in
Else we had still refused to taste
And perished in our sin*

*Pity the nations, O our God
Constrain the earth to come
Send Thy victorious word abroad
And bring the strangers home*

*We long to see Thy churches full
That all the chosen race
May with one voice and heart and soul
Sing Thy redeeming grace*

Let's go to the Lord in prayer...

Our Father, we ask that You would continue to open our eyes, open our ears, open our hearts, to continue to see, to hear, to understand, to submit, and to love the



glory of Your salvation and the glory of Your Son. We pray this in His Name, Amen.

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