

Eternal Life (John 17:1-5)

30 Aug 09

Let's take our Bibles now and open to the Gospel of John; John Chapter 17. And I want to direct our attention at verses 1 through 5. Chapter 17, verses 1 through 5. Now let me read those words for us as we begin our study of God's Word. "Jesus spoke these things, and lifting up his eyes to heaven He said, Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that Your Son may glorify You. For You gave Him authority over all flesh that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. This is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I glorified You on the earth by accomplishing the work which You gave Me to do. Now Father, glorify Me together with Yourself with the glory which I had with You before the world was."

On this Lord's day and next Lord's day we are going to do a two part study; in the mornings we are going to look at eternal life, and in the evenings we are going to look at eternal punishment. Which, by the way, describes the only two possible destinations for everybody. Everybody is either going to go in to eternal life or they will go in to eternal punishment. Those are the only two options. And, by the way, both of those teachings, eternal life, at least parts of it, or aspects of it, and eternal punishment are questioned even within Christianity. And particularly, elements related to eternal punishment are, you can say, are even under attack within Christianity these days, so we'll be looking at that carefully tonight. But for this morning, look at the passage that we just read and you'll notice that in verse two Jesus gives eternal life, and then in verse 3 we're given a definition of eternal life.

Now you can see that eternal life consists of knowing God and Jesus Christ. And the knowing here is not merely an intellectual knowing. This is not talking about knowing about God and about Jesus Christ. The word indicates a deep, intimate, personal knowledge. It's not just knowing about God and Christ, it's about possessing a personal knowledge of them. It is the joyful acknowledgement of the only true God; the One who sent Jesus Christ. It is the glad acceptance of Christ as the One God sent believing that there is only one true God, and the only way to that One is through the One that He sent. You can see here that knowledge of God, the true God, can't be severed from a knowledge of Jesus Christ. People who say they know God but are not sure about Christ go contrary to what this verse says. And to know Christ transforms a person and introduces them into a different quality of living. A quality of living known as eternal life. And it is a quality of living. Being united with Christ through faith unites us to His life which has an eternal quality to it.

Eternal life is both a quantity, it's eternal, and it's a quality, it's a kind of life, that life lasts forever. And for the believer, this life is a present reality. In Chapter 5 of John's gospel, verse 24, we're told that Jesus said, "Truly, truly I say to you, he who hears My Word, and believes Him

who sent Me, has eternal life and does not come into judgment but has passed out of death and in to life.” So it’s something they already have. He doesn’t say it’s something you’re going to get, it’s something you already have. It’s a quality of life that begins at the moment of belief and lasts forever.

And we can know that we have that life. John wrote in his first letter, 1 John 5:13, “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you many know that you have eternal life.” So this is an amazing thing. Through faith in Christ we enter in to a deep, intimate relationship with God. We come out of death and in to life; real life, abundant life, eternal life. Good news. And grasping the significance of this good news can dramatically change our lives. And it’s something we need to have a grip on because in recent years we have seen how insecure our world can be; how insecure your world can be. You’ve seen it in how your stocks can go down. The value of your stocks can dramatically go down. Your retirement account, the value of it goes down dramatically. Some people have seen it in how the value of their home can go down dramatically. I might have told you, I bought a home in California four years ago. California real estate: great investment, right? The value has gone down 45% since I bought it four years ago. Great investment! Your health can severely and seriously decline rapidly. You can lose your job. We live in a day of global uncertainty and insecurity.

So, how secure is this eternal life that we have, because this is where this doctrine gets questioned. There are those who say you can have eternal life and then lose it. Are they right, and how do you know for sure? Well, this passage is going to help to answer that question. John 17 is known as Jesus’s high priestly prayer. It’s the night before Christ’s crucifixion. He’s just spent some extended time with His disciples, and, as recorded in chapters 13 through 16. He concludes that time with this prayer spoken in the hearing of those disciples. And this is an amazing prayer. Surely it’s one of the most profound and magnificent prayers recorded in all of scripture. In this prayer the veil is drawn back and we’re escorted by Jesus Himself in to the Holy of Holies. We’re taken right to the throne of God by Jesus. And as we look at the opening section of this prayer, the first five verses, Jesus gives us four reasons our eternal life is secure. As Jesus prays, anticipating the cross we can identify four reasons here why we can have confidence in our eternal life.

Let me give you reason number one. It’s because of Christ’s glory at the cross, Christ’s glory at the cross. Verse one says “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.” Jesus had ended his teaching of the disciples on a triumphant note. If you just look back to the last verse of chapter 16 He said “these things I have spoken to you so that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation. Take courage! I have overcome the world.” Jesus now turns His thoughts to the work that He will perform in overcoming the world which is the work on the cross. And He turns His eyes to heaven and prays to His father. That’s just a little indication of the intimacy of their relationship. And the fact that Jesus continually referred to God as His father, that was absolutely radical to the Jews, and in fact that was part of why they opposed Him. Because in

calling God his father He was making Himself out to be equal with God. He addresses God as His father, and starts off His prayer with these words: The hour has come.

The hour has come. Now if you're familiar at all with John's gospel you'll know the subject of Christ's hour is a significant theme. Let me just trace it for you. If you can follow along we are going to go back and start at chapter two. Chapter two verses one through four. What's he talking about when He says "the hour has come"? Chapter two verses one through four, we see the first indication of this hour. It says, "On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee and the mother of Jesus, and both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding. When the wine ran out the mother of Jesus said to Him, 'they have no wine'. And Jesus said to her, 'woman, what does that have to do with us? My hour has not yet come.'" Now that's kind of obscure. I mean He's referring to His hour. His hour has not yet come. What's He talking about? It's not really clear, this first indication. Look over at chapter seven and we'll see the next reference to His hour.

Chapter seven starting in verse two. It says "Now the Feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, was near, therefore His brothers, Jesus's brothers, said to Him, 'leave here and go in to Judea so that Your disciples also may see your works which you are doing. For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show yourself to the world.' For not even His brothers were believing in Him. So Jesus said to them, 'My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune. The world cannot hate you but it hates Me because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil. Go up to the feast yourselves; I do not go up to this feast because my time has not yet fully come.'" So here again He is referring to a time, and it's a time that is yet to come but it hasn't come yet.

Well, He eventually did go to this feast and He spoke to crowds at this feast and that caused some problems. And so verse 30 of chapter seven says they were seeking to seize Him, and no man laid his hand on Him. Why? Because His hour had not yet come. So they wanted to seize Him. They wanted to do bodily harm to Him. They were prevented from doing that. Why? Because it was not the right time yet. His hour hadn't come yet. And this starts to give us a little clue about what this hour is talking about.

Look over at chapter eight and verse twenty. "These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come." They wanted to seize Him, but they were prevented from being able to do so, and again, because His hour had not yet come. So now we're starting to get an idea that at some time this hour is going to come and these people aren't going to be prevented from seizing Him. And we start to understand what this is getting at and it's made clear when we get to chapter 12. Chapter 12 starting in verse 23. "And Jesus answered them saying the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. '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. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, here My servant

will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him. 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. Father, glorify Your name.’ Then a voice came out of heaven: ‘I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.’ So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; other were saying, ‘an angel has spoken to Him.’ Jesus answered and said, ‘this voice has not come for My sake but for your sakes. Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.’ But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.” So now we know for sure what this hour is all about. It’s the hour when He is going to die, and specifically He is going to die by being lifted up from the earth on a cross.

So the ‘hour’ is the hour of his death, the time when He is going to be crucified. But it’s really more than that. Chapter 13 verse one, “Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.” So that seems to indicate that this hour includes, along with the crucifixion, His resurrection and His ascension back to the Father. And really you can’t separate any of those things. His death, His resurrection, and ascension all go together; they are part of the ‘hour’. The hour begins with His death and Jesus knows that the hour has come. This is an hour that has been planned and determined from eternity past. In fact, this hour was prophesied.

In Daniel Chapter nine verse 26, the prophesy was given that there would be a time period of 483 years from the giving of the decree to rebuild Jerusalem until the Messiah came. That prophesy was fulfilled to the day when Christ made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, which was just days before His crucifixion.

So that prophesy has been fulfilled, the hour has come, the time for the Messiah to be cut off, to be executed, because it says after the Messiah comes He will be cut off, executed. Jesus is divulging that hour has come.

It’s the hour of the consummation of His earthly ministry; redemptive history reaching its apex. It’s THE hour.

And notice how Jesus refers to that hour. It’s a time when Christ would be glorified. You’ll notice there that He says ‘glorify Your Son’. That’s a Messianic term, the Son of God. That’s a Messianic term, and when He says, ‘glorify Your Son’, and then in verse five He says ‘glorify Me’, this is a prayer that only deity can offer. You and I can’t pray this prayer; ‘Father, glorify me.’ That’s not right. Jesus can pray this prayer because of who he is. He is the Son of God. And He says the hour has come, the hour to be crucified, and He wants to be glorified in that hour.

Crucifixion could hardly be classified as a glorious way to die. And in fact it was the most shameful way to die. But it would be a time when Christ’s infinite glory would be displayed. To glorify Him means to bring in to full display all of his character and all of His attributes. And

that's what happened at the cross. He's the Savior doing His saving work. He's the Lamb of God presenting Himself as the perfect and acceptable sacrifice. It is revealing Him for who He is, and all that He is. What looked like the worst is really a victory. What seemed like a tragedy when Christ was crucified between two common thieves and mocked by the crowds was really a triumph. What seemed like a moment of supreme shame would actually be Christ's supreme honor. It is a work for which Christ receives praise from all around the world. It was a time when the Son was glorified, and as He prayed, it was a time when the Father was glorified as well. There is no doubt that the cross displayed God's glory like no other single event. In the cross we see God's righteousness, God's justice, God's holiness, and His wrath, as Christ takes on His wrath for sin. But also on the cross we see God's grace, and God's mercy, and God's love displayed because his wrath is poured out and satisfied on one who stands as a substitute for those who really deserve it. God didn't set aside His holy demands, His demands were fully satisfied, but they were satisfied in a way in which he demonstrated his grace to you and me.

And that marvelously displays the infinite wisdom of God as He perfectly satisfies all of His attributes in this one event. In fact we can talk about His power being demonstrated at the cross as He defeats sin, death, and Satan.

And the event shows God's sovereignty as His predetermined plan is executed perfectly right down to the hour.

So is our eternal life secure? Well it's secured by an event that displays the full glory of the Father and the Son. There is absolutely nothing lacking in the work that secures eternal life. How glorious could it be if that payment he offered at the cross could not secure your eternal life? Our eternal life is secure because of the glory of Christ. The glory displayed at the cross.

Well, you might say, 'the issue isn't with Christ, or with His work. My concern is with me. I have no doubts about Christ, but I have a lot of doubts about me.' And rightfully so.

That leads us to the second reason our eternal life is secure and we see it here in verse two, and that's because of Christ's authority because of the cross. Verse two says, "Even as you gave Him authority over all flesh, all whom you have given Him, He may give eternal life." Christ's request that He be glorified in verse one is based on the fact that He has been given all authority, Messianic authority, over all flesh. All flesh is a Hebrew expression meaning all peoples, all nations. And Christ has the authority to give eternal life. Know that this is exclusive. Christ is the only one who can grant eternal life to anybody. He is the only one and He made that clear earlier in John chapter five. John chapter five verse 21 says "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes." John chapter five verse 26 says "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man." He has the authority to grant life, and if you are familiar with John 14:6, "I am the Way the Truth, and the Life. Nobody comes to the Father except through Me." He has the exclusive right to give

eternal life. And he gives it to everyone the Father gives to Him, as He says in verse two. He does not give it to everyone, just certain ones, the ones that the Father gives to Him. Again, this idea of the Father giving people to the Son is seen throughout John's gospel.

I want you to look at these with me. Turn back to John chapter six for a minute. This is what we would refer to as the Doctrine of Divine Election. But I want you to see just how clearly it's stated. John chapter six verse 37 reads, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." Again, it's the Father giving people to the Son, and there's a certainty that the one given will be received and will be given eternal life. Verse 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." And again, a reference to those given to the Son by the Father. Verse 44, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day." There again you see those drawn by the Father come to Christ.

Turn over to chapter 10. Just a couple of other references. Chapter 10 verses 27 to 29, Jesus is speaking. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." Again, here's people given by the Father to the Son, and they're given eternal life by the Son. In fact, verse 28 says I give eternal life and it is a gift, it is presented as a gift, it's a present gift; I am giving them, all the ones that come to me, I am giving them this gift of eternal life and they will never perish.

When He says they will never perish, He uses the strongest possible word in the Greek language to say that there is absolutely no way they will perish. I've told you, the two Greek words there are ou me (ού μή). And whenever you read the word ou me in your Greek New Testament it means "no way". Ou me, no way. No way they are going to perish. It is eternal life. There is a quantity to it. Not temporary life, but eternal life. They will not perish.

There's even double protection because He says no one is able to snatch them out of My hand, and my Father who had given them to Me; no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. The Father gives to the Son. He's got a vested interest in this group of people. Nobody is going to snatch them away.

Let's go back to chapter six again for just a minute, and let's see more about this emphasis on security. Chapter six verse 37 says, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who come to Me I will certainly not cast out." I will certainly not cast out. And verse 39, "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose," how many?, "nothing, but raise it up on the last day." I lose nothing, but raise it up; the whole group. I'm going to raise the whole group up to Me, the whole group given to the Son by the Father, the whole group is going to be raised up, not one of them is going to be missing.

You say, okay, I get that. I see that. It's clear. But how do I know if I'm one of the ones given to by the Father to the Son? What if I want to come to Christ but I'm not selected by the Father? Well, look again in verse 37, it says "All that the Father gives to Me will come to Me and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." So erase that image from your mind that there's people lining up wanting to come to Christ and he's saying "sorry Blakey, you're not on the list." That doesn't happen. First of all there aren't people lining up wanting to get in to heaven. But anybody who comes to Christ isn't going to be eliminated. It says "whoever comes to me will certainly NOT be cast out." And here's the characteristic of the one given by the Father to the Son. In verse 40, it says "For this is the will of My Father that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life. I Myself will raise him up on the last day." So here's the characteristic of those coming to Christ, the characteristic of those the Father gives to the Son; they are the ones beholding and believing in Him. Everyone who beholds and believes. Everyone who meets that description will be given eternal life and will be raised up on the last day. It's absolutely and totally secure, the basis of His work on the cross. Christ has the authority to give life, eternal life.

So the Father gives people to the Son, the Son gives them eternal life. And again those who the Father gives are described as those who behold and believe in the Son. Listen carefully to what that's saying. To behold means more than just to see. Behold means to grasp the significance. There were a lot of people who saw Christ on the cross. But not all of them beheld the significance of what was accomplished on that cross. There were an awful lot of people right there watching it happen who were mocking Christ. They were seeing it, they knew it was happening but they weren't beholding the significance of it. It's those who behold the son; they're the ones who also believe in Him. Not just about Him, they believe in Him. They trust in Him for life. They commit themselves to Him for their salvation.

What does that mean to believe in Him, to trust in Him, to commit yourself to Him? Well, verse 51 of John six where Jesus says "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Anyone who eats of this bread will live forever. And the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is my flesh. Then the Jews began to argue with one another saying 'how can this man give us His flesh to eat?' So Jesus said to them 'truly, truly I say to you unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood you have no life in yourselves. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I'll raise him up on the last day. My flesh is true food and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me he also will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever.'" Now Jesus here is presenting a picture of what it means to believe in Him, to trust in Him, to commit yourself to Him, and He relates it to eating and drinking. He's not speaking literally here. These are pictures of what commitment looks like, what trust looks like. When you eat something, when you drink something, you are making a commitment. And that commitment affects you. Am I making sense? Are you understanding?

You go to a restaurant, you don't know those people in the kitchen. Food comes out, you eat it. It's an expression of trust, commitment, it's believing. And that might be questionable in some cases. There's no question in this case with Christ. He's talking about making a commitment to Him. And if that's you, then you have eternal life. Because he says in verses 47 and 48 "Truly, truly I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. I am the Bread of Life." Just think about this, and think about the security that's being talked about here. If you believe in Christ that means you were given by the Father to the Son, and the Father isn't taking anybody back. He's giving them to the Son. If you are a believer in Christ it means you are in that position because the Father gave you to the Son. And he's not going to take you back away. Nor will the Son cast you out. He doesn't even object to those that the Father gives to Him even though He may have reason to. "Father anybody but Blakey." He doesn't object. He receives those that the Father gives to Him. And he gives them eternal life. And all those that the Father gives to the Son, and the Son gives eternal life, that whole group, the Son is going to raise up on the last day. Verse 40, "For this is the will of My Father that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life and I Myself will raise Him up on the last day." Jesus gives us life. Jesus guards and sustains that life. And Jesus is there at the end raising us up to be with Him. Eternal life is something that cannot be lost. It's totally secure.

You know if you could lose your salvation, if I could lose my salvation I would. If it was up to me I would lose it. If I could I would. There's no doubt about it. If I could lose my salvation I would. But it's secure in Christ. It's totally secure. It cannot be lost. You can lose everything else, but once you have eternal life it is absolutely secure. It's secure because of Christ's glory at the cross. The full extent of His glory is seen in that event that secures your eternal life. The glory would be tarnished if someone that he died for was lost. And because of Christ's faithfulness in that hour, He has the authority to give life to all of those given to Him by the Father.

The reality is that because of our own sin we would never come to Christ on our own. But God in His love draws people and gives to the Son and all that He gives receive eternal life from the one who has authority to give it, and it can never ever be lost. You see it isn't dependent on me. It isn't even dependent on my commitment to Christ. It's totally dependent on Him. It's totally dependent on who He is and what He has done. Like I said, if I could lose my salvation I would. But my trust is in Christ, and in Him my eternal life is totally secure.

Well, we've looked at two out of the four reasons. You'll have to come back next week for the other two, but these two are enough to secure you from this Sunday till next Sunday. This is a good time to stop and have the Lord's Table. Remember Christ's work on that cross.

Before you zip up all your Bibles, there are a few more important things I want to say. Perhaps there are some here today who have looked at Christ, and you know some things about Christ, but you don't have that intimate knowledge of Him that is characteristic of eternal life. You've never really believed in Him, you believed about Him, the facts about Him, but you've never

really believed in Him. You're holding on to some sin. And while you might be acknowledging Christ, you're holding Him out at arm's length. I would say to you come to Him today. Come to Him today. He will not cast you out. He will give you eternal life. And that life is secure. It's as secure as His glory, and His authority.

In the elements of the Lord's Table we're reminded of that work on the cross. The bread reminds us that He gave Himself. He says "this is My body." He gave Himself. He Himself stood in the place of condemnation. He Himself stood in that place and took the wrath of God our sin deserved. He Himself did that. The bread reminds us that He gave Himself for us. The cup reminds us of the blood that He shed. He gave His life paying the debt that had accrued to our account; a debt that we had absolutely no way of paying. He shed His blood, He gave His life to pay the debt that we owed. Do you believe in Him? If you do, you have eternal life and that life is secure.

Today is a day to give thanks for the security of the eternal life the Son of God gives. Let's all of us just pray, talk to the Lord, whatever is on your heart that you need to talk to Him about. And then in just a minute or two I'll pray and the men will come and serve us the elements.

Lord as we sang earlier, all we have is Christ. In our sin we were dead and in our rebellion we were alienated from You. We recognize that it takes a work on Your part for us to be saved. And all we have is Christ. And we're trusting in Him; that His work satisfied what you require. And we're trusting that because of His glory, His authority, the life that He has given to us is totally secure. And Lord we're here, as we partake of these elements now we give You thanks. Thanks for the salvation and thank you for the security of it. Knowing that those whom Christ receives He secures. And He will raise all of them up on that last day. Father we give You thanks. We express our gratitude to You. Lord we don't have anything else to offer to You other than to say thank You. And as we partake of these elements now Lord, may it be an expression of our thanks to You for what Christ has done in our place. For we pray this in His name. Amen.