

This is a parentheses in the ongoing narrative of the final hours of Jesus' earthly ministry before the cross. Towns makes reference to this chapter as the 'Holy of Holies of the New Testament.'¹ It is certainly holy ground that we are entering into as we read this passage. The traditional "Lord's prayer" was a model of how all disciples should use in prayer. This chapter contains both the heart of our Lord and our Heavenly Father. Herein is contained the true passion of the Godhead and by extension of God's love, the passion of God for His beloved people.

The natural division is as follows:

- **Jesus' prayer regarding Himself** (vs' 1 - 5).
- **Jesus' prayer for the disciples** (vs' 6 - 19).
- **Jesus' prayer for all believers down through the church age** (vs' 20 - 26).

Towns divides this section in another interesting way, by the objects of His requests:

- For **Glorification** of the Son - 17:1.
- For **Restoration** of His Glory - 17:5.
- For **Protection** of His disciples and future disciples - 17:11, 15.
- For **Sanctification** of all disciples - 17:17.
- For **Unification** of all disciples with each other and the Godhead - 17:21 - 23.
- For **Glorification** of God to be experienced by all believers - 17:24.
- For **Salvation** of the world - 17:25, 26.²

Jesus' Prayer for Himself.³

After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. John 17:1, NIV.⁴

Note the reciprocity of Jesus' glory with the Father: the hint here is that Jesus' glory has been limited in some way, indeed, this is probably a reference to the so-called "*kenosis*" as referred to by Paul in Phillipians 2:7 - 9 ([KJV](#), [NIV](#), [AMP](#), [NASB](#)) where He voluntarily limited His divine powers and took on the appearance of a servant in His earthly ministry looking forward in time to the cross. We must be very careful how this

¹ THE GOSPEL OF JOHN BELIEVE AND LIVE, Elmer Towns, page 169.

² From Towns - I think the seventh request is a typo (Towns says vs 21). I'm taking the liberty of assigning verses 25 and 26 to this request.

³ Again, I'm borrowing from Towns on the outline - an obvious choice.

⁴ Scripture taken from the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved.

limitation is presented for at no time did Jesus Christ find Himself devoid of divinity, nor did He find Himself in His incarnation devoid or limited of humanity. We must accept Jesus' prayer on its face that He is requesting that the Father glorify Him just as He has glorified the Father. The reciprocity is also found in chapter 1:1 where: **"...In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."** Here we see a glimpse into the God-head and the relationship that the Father had with the Son. John went on in verses 2 where: **"...He was with God in the beginning."** The original has "with" as a face-to-face relationship.

My point here is that we cannot fathom the Person of Jesus Christ - how could He limit His glory so that He could fulfill the Father's will that salvation through His death on the cross be accomplished? I cannot imagine such a thing but it did, indeed happen. Jesus had no "leg up" on resisting the temptation of sin and the pressure that came from that temptation. Satan exerted tremendous pressure on Jesus to sin, but He remained the obedient sinless Son of God. The writer of Hebrews depicts this condition of humiliation as the Man who offered up prayers with in loud voice and crying. Jesus, in this self-imposed humiliation *learned obedience* through suffering from temptation. Here Jesus is praying that He be glorified by the Father just as He has glorified the Father.

²For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. ³Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. ⁴I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. ⁵And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had. (John 17:2 - 5, NIV).

This is the plan of the Father: all authority has been given to the Son over all people - this is especially significant for the devil thought that *he* had the authority over all sinners, indeed that seems to be the apparent status quo - see Ephesians 2:1 - 3 ([NIV](#), [KJV](#), [AMP](#), [NASB](#)). To advance this point further we know that in the time to come that every creature will confess that Jesus is Lord (Phil 2:9 - 12, [NIV](#), [AMP](#), [KJV](#), [NASB](#)). This prayer considers the fact that now, Jesus, in His hypostasis as the God-man was *not* receiving this glory - in a few hours the hands of sinners (over whom He had authority) would seize Him and do unimaginable harm to Him and nail Him to the cross! It is clear that Satan did not have ultimate authority over sinners for all along according to the plan of the Father it was necessary that the sins of all sinners were to be atoned for and that salvation was to be freely offered to all. The choice is for all sinners to decide whether or not *reject* this glorious, loving offer of salvation.

A unique look into salvation is offered here also: that **salvation is not merely escape from hell** - rather it is the wonderful opportunity for each and every sinner to come to know God and His dear Son! The gospel hymn writer Hewett has expressed it so well:

He takes my crimson stains away,
what a blessed salvation!
He helps and keeps me every day,
What a blessed salvation!
What a blessed salvation in Christ my Redeemer
What a blessed salvation for sinners like me.
His everlasting grace proclaim,
What a blessed salvation!
Thro' endless days we'll sing His name,
What a blessed salvation!

Note that this eternal life is not merely a condition of living forever, but knowing our wonderful Lord for all eternity!

Verse 5 contains Jesus' prayer that the Father glorify the Son with the glory that He had [*imperfect tense, echo to possess*]. This is indisputable evidence of the preexistent Son of God. Paul calls to mind this pre-incarnation status as an equality in essence with the Father - that the divine essence of Christ was not a thing to be strived for or snatched by Christ (Phil 2:6, [NIV](#), [KJV](#), [AMP](#), [NASB](#)). The verb *echo* is used here to denote the pre-incarnation glory that the Son of God possessed, the imperfect tense denotes that this glory was never vacated but voluntarily restricted by the Son of God Himself. I must point out that there were proponents of the vacating of Jesus' divine nature during this earthly period in His Incarnation ministry where the so-called "Kenoticist" say that The Son of God was emptied of His divinity in such a way that he was in a helpless condition and devoid of His divine essence - that the Son was mutable which is, of course, heresy. We know that this is certainly not true from the dialogue between Jesus and Pilate where He told him that he would not have authority at all unless it was given to him from above - an irony because Pilate was looking at the source of his power who was apparently helpless before him.⁵ **Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever** ([Heb 13:8](#)). He had not been vacated of His divine nature or authority. He merely choose not to exercise it. Lenski refers to this period of Jesus earthly ministry as the "*Humiliation*." That is a better description of what Jesus is praying for - He prays for the *transition* from His humiliation to His glorification.

Note that this eternal life is not merely a condition of living forever, but knowing our wonderful Lord for all eternity!

So we need to be careful when we refer to the Humiliation of Christ for any limitation of His divine glory was voluntary and could have at any time be exercised - indeed, we have glimpses of this glory particularly in chapter [18:4 - 8](#) where the arresting officers fell back. He could have at that time escaped but He asked the same question the second time and asked (in effect, in His authority commanded) that the officers let the rest go and just arrest Him.

⁵ [John 19:10 - 12](#).

The Prayer of Jesus Christ, the Intercessor.

This is a very intimate glimpse into the relationship between the Father and the Son. I can imagine the conversation between the two in Eternity Past where the uncontainable, unconditional Love of God is the motivation for the plan of salvation of sinful mankind ([John 3:16](#)). On one hand, the justice of God demanded punishment for the sin of man but on the other hand God delighted in the sons of men (Prov 8:31, [NIV](#), [NASB](#), [AMP](#), [KJV](#)). So we have this wonderful dialogue between the Son and the Father that

So we have this wonderful dialogue between the Son and the Father that reveals the heart of the gospel - the uncontainable, unconditional Love of God for the sons of men that would not be frustrated in it's expressed purpose

reveals the heart of the gospel - the uncontainable, unconditional Love of God for the sons of men that would not be frustrated in it's expressed purpose⁶ - that men would know the God-head and that Jesus would in hypostasis as the God-Man be restored to His glory. This is a glimpse into the glory of [Revelation 5:13; 21:3, 4](#). The glory that we all will be privileged to enjoy for Jesus Christ prayed to that end: **"...Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent."** This wonderful prayer also looks forward to that time when Jesus Christ transitions from His Humiliation to His Glory - the glory that we all as sinners saved by grace will enjoy.

⁶ [Proverbs 8:17](#).