

John: sermon #19A  
**The Prayer of the Overcomer**  
(John 17:1-12)

## **Introduction**

**The setting of John chapter 17 is late in the evening**, perhaps still in the Upper Room at the Last Supper, or perhaps in or **near the Garden of Gethsemane** where Jesus often met with his disciples to pray. In any case, this chapter presents what Warren Wiersbe refers to as the “holy of holies” of the Gospels—an account of **the prayer of God the Son conversing with God his Father just as Jesus is about to give his life as a ransom for us all.**

This prayer makes it clear to us that Jesus is **truly the Overcomer**. From a human perspective his arrest later that evening and his crucifixion the next day, look like **overwhelming defeat**. Yet we know better—it was the moment of Jesus’ overwhelming victory. He was, and still is, the Great Overcomer: **“Take heart!” he encourages us, “I have overcome the world” (16:33).** The word *world* is used nineteen times in this prayer, making clear the connection between chapter 17 and 16:33. **Our calling and privilege is to participate with Jesus in his prayer and in his love and life as the Overcomer. Indeed, we are overcomers in him.**

**Why did Jesus pray the way he did here? Certainly he was preparing for the suffering ahead. But he also had his disciples in mind (17:13). He prayed about their security, their joy, their unity, and their future glory. And his prayer extends to us. Jesus wants us to know all he has done for us and given to us; and all he will yet do for us—in this life and the next. (Timeless last word’s that include us today, don’t bottle up these words in a certain time frame, 2000 years ago, when the prayer is for us here and now, today)**

**In this prayer—often referred to as Jesus’ ‘high priestly prayer’—Jesus our High Priest and Lord declares four wonderful privileges we have as those who follow the Overcomer: 1) we share his life, 2) we know his name, 3) we have his word, and 4) we share his glory.**

***Lord, may we hear your words of encouragement to us clearly and may we respond with your joy and commitment.***

**1. We share Jesus' life (17:1–5)**

***<sup>1</sup> After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. <sup>2</sup> For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. <sup>3</sup> Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. <sup>4</sup> I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup> And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began."***

**Jesus begins his prayer by praying for himself, but in praying for himself, he was also praying for us. His burden—his motivating passion — was the glory of God, and this glory would be realized in his finished work on the cross. The servant of God has every right to ask his Father for the help needed to glorify his name. “Hallowed be Thy name” is the first petition in the Lord’s Prayer, and it is the first emphasis in this prayer. (To glorify and reflect the life of Jesus and the Father in and through what ever trial we are going thru needs to be our motivating passion as well. To consistently and constantly be a picture of “faith in God” and “faith from Jesus” as we live through life and the trials of life is what we strive for daily. The trial of Jesus was a trial of epic proportions for him to face, yet through it all the Father’s character of “Love” and the glory given to the Son and the glory of the Father was perfectly reflected in Christ Jesus. We live lives that reflect the “hallowed” name of the Father)**

“Father, the time has come,” reminds us of the many times in John’s Gospel when this “time” is mentioned. Jesus lived on a divine timetable while on earth and he knew he was in the will of the Father. “My times are in your hands” (Psa. 31:15).

The important word *glory* is used several times in this prayer—referring to various “glories.” In 17:5, Jesus refers to his pre-incarnate glory with the

Father, the glory that he laid aside when he came to earth to be born, to serve, to suffer, and to die. In 17:4, he reported to the Father that his life and ministry on earth had glorified him, because he had finished the work the Father gave him to do. In 17:1 and 5, our Lord asked that his pre-incarnate glory be returned to him, so that the Son might glorify the Father in his return to heaven.

Jesus glorified the Father in his miracles (2:11; 11:40), to be sure; but he brought the greatest glory to the Father through his sufferings and death (see 12:23–25; 13:31, 32). From the human point of view, Calvary was a revolting display of man's sin; but from the divine point of view the cross revealed and magnified God's grace and glory. Jesus anticipated his return to heaven when he referred to "completing the work you gave me to do" (17:4). This "work" included his messages and miracles on earth (5:17–19), the training of the disciples for future service, and most of all, his sacrifice on the cross (Heb. 9:24–28; 10:11–18).

It is on the basis of this "finished work" of Jesus that we have the gift of eternal life (17:2, 3). The word *give* is used in one form or another in this prayer at least seventeen times. Seven times Jesus states that believers are the Father's gift to his Son (17:2, 6, 9, 11, 12, 24). We are accustomed to thinking of Jesus as the Father's love gift to us (3:16), but Jesus affirms that believers are the Father's "love gift" to him.

**"Eternal life" is an important theme in John's Gospel;** it is mentioned at least seventeen times. Eternal life is God's free gift to those who believe on his Son (3:15, 16, 36; 6:47; 10:28). **The Father gave his Son the authority to give eternal life to those whom the Father gave to the Son. From the human viewpoint, we receive this gift the moment we believe in Jesus Christ. But from the divine viewpoint, we have already been given to the Son in divine election from before the beginning of time.** This is a mystery that we accept by faith.

**What is this "eternal life"? It is not merely 'everlasting life'—a non-ending progression of minutes. Rather it is a 'kind' (quality) of life that involves knowing God personally. And it's not just knowing *about* God, but having a personal, free and intimate relationship with him through faith in Jesus. It is not enough simply to "believe in God," for "the devils [demons] also believe,**

**and tremble” (James 2:19). Our Lord’s debate with the Jewish leaders (8:12ff) makes it clear that people may be devoutly religious and still not know God. Eternal life is not something we earn by character or conduct; it is a gift we receive by **admitting we are sinners, repenting (turning to God), and believing in Jesus Christ, God’s Son.****

**The Father answered his Son’s request (verse 5) and gave him glory. And thus today in heaven there is a glorified Man, the God-Man, Jesus Christ—the one who took humanity up into himself, reconciling to God the humanity he took into himself and he took the humanity that he took on, now glorified, with himself into heaven, that is why Jesus is today a glorified human being. And so because Jesus the God-man is glorified in heaven, sinners on earth who come into union and communion with him are saved and have the promise of growing in glory now (“from glory to glory”) and a future of full glory in heaven with him. This is eternal life, a relationship now then a future fullness of glory.**

**Because we share this life with Jesus, we share his victory. Because he is the Overcomer, in him we are overcomers too: “For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4). When we were born the first time, we were born “in Adam.” We were born losers. But when we put our trust in Jesus to be our Savior, we were born again as winners. Satan tries to obscure this precious truth of the finished work of Jesus, because he knows it is the basis of his defeat: “And they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb” (Rev. 12:11). Don’t let Satan rob you of your position of victory in Christ.**

**What Have We Learned in this section? How Does This Apply Personally (Practical Theology)?**

***From Members of Your TLC Pastoral Leadership Team: Jesus set aside His pre-incarnate glory with the Father to do a work, which He finished, thus bringing us into personal relationship with the Father through the Son which is "eternal life". We are in fact the Father's "love gift" to Christ and Christ is the Father's love gift to us. Yes, humanity is god's love gift to Jesus and through his resurrection and ascension we are with him in***

*glory now and in heaven. We can tell unbeliever the good news that god loves them and has already reconciled them to himself thru the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We are privileged to share Jesus' life—the life of the Overcomer.*

And there is *another* privilege that is ours...

## **2. We know Jesus' name (17:6–12)**

*<sup>6</sup> "I have revealed you ['your name', see footnote] to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. <sup>7</sup> Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. <sup>8</sup> For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. <sup>9</sup> I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. <sup>10</sup> All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. <sup>11</sup> I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. <sup>12</sup> While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.*

Jesus reveals to us the Father by sharing with us the Father's name. **The Father's name is one and the same as his character, which Jesus manifested to his disciples**—particularly this night in the Upper Room. In the NRSV (and the NIV footnote), verse 6a reads: **"I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world."** In Hebrew culture, personal names often expressed something of the person's character. When Jesus prays to the Father that, **"I have made your name known"**, he means that he has revealed **God's character (nature). One of the ministries of the Son was to declare the Father—to make him known (1:18).** Jesus did not instantly reveal the Father in a blaze of blinding glory because his disciples could not have endured that kind of experience. Rather, gradually by word and deed, Jesus revealed to them the nature of God as Father (16:12).

**God revealed himself to Israel as the great I AM (Ex. 3:11–14). Jesus revealed this same God as Father, Son and Spirit (the triune God), proclaiming of himself as one with the Father: “I am the Bread of Life” (6:35); “I am the Light of the world” (8:12); “I am the Good Shepherd” (10:11); etc. Jesus reveals God’s name by exemplifying and by proclaiming the Father. The word *Father* is used 53 times in John 13–17, and 122 times in John’s Gospel where **Jesus makes it clear that the Father sent him, that he was equal to the Father, and that his words and works came from the Father.****

Jesus makes it clear that knowing God as Father is the ‘place of safety’ for the believer. **Father God protects his own (17:11, 12). Thus our safety and security depends on the character and nature of God our Father. When he was on earth, Jesus protected his disciples and they could depend on him: “I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me” (17:12). If the Savior, incarnate in our humanity, could keep his own while he was limited to an earthly (human) existence, is he not able to protect them now that he is glorified in heaven? He and the Father, together with the Spirit, are surely able to guard and secure God’s people!**

**Furthermore we are secure because God’s people are the Father’s gift to his Son. Would the Father present his Son with a gift that would not last? The disciples (as Jews) had belonged to the Father by creation and covenant, but now they belonged to the Father’s Son. How precious we are in his sight! How carefully he watches over us and even now prays for us! Remember this and rejoice whenever you feel as though the Lord has forgotten you, or that his love seems far away.**

Our security as believers rests in another fact: **we are here to glorify Jesus (17:10). With all of their failures and faults, Jesus still commends his disciples with these words: “Glory has come to me through them.”** Would it bring glory to God if a believer failed to make it into heaven? Certainly not! Whatever God starts, he finishes (Phil. 1:6). **Indeed, God has provided the divine resources in himself for us to glorify him and be faithful. We have his word (17:7, 8), and his word reveals to us all that we have in Jesus Christ. The word gives us faith and assurance. We have the Son of God interceding for us (17:9) and the Father always answers the Son’s prayers (11:41, 42).**

**God also gives us the fellowship of the body of Christ, the church: “that they may be one, as we are one” (17:11). The New Testament knows nothing of isolated believers; wherever you find saints, you find them in fellowship. Why? Because God’s people need each other.** Jesus opened his message in the Upper Room washing the disciples’ feet and teaching them to minister to one another. In the hours that followed, these men (including confident Peter) would discover how weak they were and how much they needed each other’s encouragement.

**Thus we learn from this prayer that believers, despite their weakness, are secure in Christ. Indeed, Jesus keeps safe through the Father’s name (nature) all whom the Father gives him (10:26–30). They are secure because of the nature of God, the nature of salvation, the glory of God, and the intercessory ministry of Christ.**

**But what about Judas? Why did Jesus not keep him safe? The answer is that Judas was not a believer (6:64–71); he had never been cleansed by Christ (13:11); he had not been among the chosen of Christ (13:18); he had never been given to Christ (18:8, 9). Judas is an example of an unbeliever who pretended to have salvation but was finally exposed as a fraud.**

**What Have We Learned in this section? How Does This Apply Personally (Practical Theology)?**

*From Members of Your TLC Pastoral Leadership Team: It is because we have a relationship with Jesus that we know the Father as well. Jesus has made Him known to us. We are also here to glorify Jesus. God the Father has provided the divine resources in Himself for us to glorify Him and to be faithful. Jesus started off praying for Himself but He now in verse 6 started to pray for His disciples. He, at this time, did not pray for the world but for those given to him by the Father. Our safety and security depends not on our own character or conduct or on anything we do but on the character and nature of God our Father. We are privileged to share Jesus’ life and to know his name.*

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