

**The Gospel of John (75);  
“The hour has come” (3)**

**Introduction:**

This is the third occasion that we are considering this passage of John 12:20-36. Here Jesus declared, “The hour has come that the Son of man should be glorified” (12:23). He made this statement in response to two of His disciples, Philip and Andrew, telling Him that there were certain “Greeks” (Gentiles) who wished to see Him. Their desire and request signaled to Jesus that “the hour” had arrived for Him to be “lifted up”, that is, to die upon His cross and then be raised and enthroned as king over the inaugurated promised kingdom of God. His exaltation (glorification) as the Lord over all the world would result in Him drawing all (kinds of) people unto Himself, whether Jews or Gentiles. A little further in this 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of John, Jesus declared this forthrightly, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself” (John 12:32).

Let us read our passage once again -- **John 12:20-36**.

<sup>20</sup>Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. <sup>21</sup>Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” <sup>22</sup>Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

<sup>23</sup>But Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. <sup>24</sup>Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. <sup>25</sup>He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup>If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

<sup>27</sup>“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour.’ But for this purpose I came to this hour. <sup>28</sup>Father, glorify Your name.”

Then a voice came from heaven, saying, “I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.”

<sup>29</sup>Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to Him.”

<sup>30</sup>Jesus answered and said, “This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. <sup>31</sup>Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. <sup>32</sup>And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” <sup>33</sup>This He said, signifying by what death He would die.

<sup>34</sup>The people answered Him, “We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?”

<sup>35</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. <sup>36</sup>While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.

The outline that we have employed to help us understand this passage has five divisions. We have addressed the first two (almost). Here is the outline once again.

1. The desire and request of “the Greeks” (12:20, 21)
2. Jesus speaks of the necessity of His cross in order to inaugurate and advance His kingdom (12:22-26)
3. Jesus’ appeal for help from His Father to endure His cross (12:27, 28)
4. The Father purposed to glorify Jesus before the people through His cross (12:29-33)
5. Jesus exhorts those Jews who heard Him to believe that which they had been taught and had witnessed regarding Him (12:34-36).

## **II. Jesus speaks of the necessity of His cross in order to inaugurate and advance His kingdom (12:23-26) (continued--again)**

Last Lord's Day we were considering the words of our Lord Jesus when He spoke of the necessity of dying upon His cross in order to inaugurate and advance His kingdom (12:22-26). Before we move on from here, I would like us to consider more precisely the instruction that our Lord gave His disciples, when He announced to them that He was about to die. **Verse 26** reads, ***"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."*** We addressed last week what it is to be a "servant" of Jesus Christ. The true Christian, that is, the true disciple, is literally the *slave* of Jesus Christ. He lives to serve His Master, Jesus Christ. His occupation is a voluntary servitude, one in which he takes great pleasure and receives great blessing. The true Christian desires foremost that he serves His Master faithfully.

But in the light of this particular passage, how is that service to be performed by the Christian? Jesus declared, "If anyone serves Me, ***let him follow Me.***" We serve Jesus Christ by following Him. Following Jesus suggests following Him in the course that He has traveled before us. In doing so we are to conform our way of thinking to His way of thinking. We are to act and react to what we face as He has acted and reacted to what He encountered and overcame. To follow Jesus is to observe and consider how He lived, regarding Him and His ways as our pattern or as our example to live in the same way. But, again, specifically, how do we follow Him as set forth here in this context?

### **A. How we are to follow Jesus.**

We read that although Jesus (in His human nature) desired that He would escape His suffering and death, He denied Himself of this desire, purposing rather to glorify His Father through what He encountered and endured. Rather than serving Himself first and foremost, He served His Father. How is this translated into our lives as His servants, as His followers?

We, too, face much tribulation in this life. We have sickness and weakness of body. We have difficulty and disappointments due to events that transpire in our lives. We have heartache and hardship in our relationships. We naturally want to escape these troubles. We wish to be healed of our infirmities. We desire our sufferings to end. And so, we are as the Lord Jesus first requested, we ask our Father to remove what is burdening us, or causing us pain, or threatens our well-being. But if we are following our Lord Jesus rightly, we are to subordinate those personal desires to the greater goal and desire of glorifying Him in whatever we are experiencing. We are to pray,

"Father, yes, I desire and ask that You bring an end to my trial, but more importantly, may You enable me to glorify You through this trial that You have called me to face and endure!"

This is what it is to follow Jesus in this context before us of John 12.

But sadly, we do not naturally think as our Lord instructs us to do. We wrongly think that it is not "normal" for us to experience difficult health issues, troubles in relationships, trials and troubles of every sort. And when we do, we assume that it is the Lord's will to relieve us of our difficulty, to bring healing to us of our infirmities, and to resolve our difficulties quickly on every occasion. And we wrongly think that if we are living in a manner that is pleasing Him, and we are praying rightly unto Him, that He will fix our problems sooner than later. And so, we ask our heavenly Father as did the Lord Jesus: "Father, may You remove this cup from me?" But, if we were following Jesus rightly, we would append our request with this word of acquiescence (submissive compliance),

"Nevertheless, Father, not my will but Thine be done. Father, if you can glorify Yourself through my enduring this hardship, then so be it. If this is possible for me to so, then I do not ask foremost that you remove me from my tribulation, but I ask that you give me the grace to endure it and thereby glorify You through it."

One of the reasons we fail to respond initially in this way to our trials, is because we falsely assume that it is God's will for us to live trouble free, with little difficulty or heartache. But we need to remind ourselves that...

## **B. Disciples are destined for tribulation in this world.**

It is clear from the Scriptures that the abnormal life for the Christian is to live with little or no tribulation. Our Lord Himself told His disciples, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. ***In the world you will have tribulation;*** but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). It is the normal course of life for Christ's disciples to have "tribulation."

One of the first words of instruction that the Apostle Paul gave to new churches was that they were destined for "many tribulations."

And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, <sup>22</sup>strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must ***through many tribulations*** enter the kingdom of God." (Acts 14:21f)

And then the Apostle Peter wrote to (perhaps new) Christians,

Beloved, ***do not think it strange*** concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, ***as though some strange thing happened to you;*** <sup>13</sup>but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. <sup>14</sup> If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. (1 Pet. 4:12 NKJ)

God has not promised that we will escape tribulation or even to be delivered from tribulation. But rather, He has promised us that He will save us ***through many tribulations.*** This is the course our Lord took and it is the course we will take if we are following Him. His path to glorification was through His cross, and so the path of our glorification is through the crosses that we bear following Him. Paul expressed it this way in Romans 8:16-18:

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, ***if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*** <sup>18</sup>For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

If we see this truth rightly and clearly, then when we encounter tribulation, particularly when it is heaped upon us by unjust unbelievers, we will rejoice in what we encounter. This is what Peter himself experienced along with the other apostles, as recorded in **Acts 4:40-42.**

...and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ***So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.*** And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ.

They were companions in tribulation as they stood forward and testified of Jesus Christ the Lord. They suffered public shame for doing so, but rejoiced that the Lord had counted them worthy to experience this great blessing of being beaten and abused for Him.

This enduring in faith through tribulation, not deliverance from tribulation, is one of the major lessons of the last book of the Bible, the **Revelation** of Jesus Christ. John wrote of himself while in exile for his witness to Jesus Christ.

I, John, both your brother and *companion in the tribulation* and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. (Rev. 1:9)

What John was experiencing was not unique to him. The Christians in the seven churches of Asia Minor to whom he was writing were also experiencing tribulation. John described himself as a *companion* with them in tribulation. It is our lot as Christians. It is what our Lord Jesus faced and overcame and as His followers, we are to face and overcome our tribulations as well.

We can take this a step further. We often speak of our present citizenship in the realized kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are presently reigning with Christ. This is what it means for us to be seated with Him (on His throne) “in heavenly places” (Eph. 2:6). But how is our reign best seen in this life in this world within Christ’s kingdom? **Greag Beale** wrote on Revelation 1:9, “In verse 9 John identifies himself with his readers and with Jesus as one *who reigns in the initial form of the kingdom by persevering through* tribulation.”<sup>1</sup> He then stated the matter more fully:

John and his community are people who even now reign together in Jesus’ kingdom. But this is a kingdom unanticipated by the majority of Jews. The exercise of rule in this kingdom begins and continues only as one faithfully endures tribulation. This is a formula for kingship: faithful endurance through tribulation is the means by which one reigns in the present with Jesus. Believers are not mere subjects in Christ’s kingdom. “Fellow partaker” underscores the active involvement of saints not only in enduring tribulation, but also reigning in the midst of tribulation.

Such kingship will be intensified at death (e.g. 2:10-11) and consummated at Jesus’ final *parousia* (appearance) (cf. 21:1-22:5). This ironic exercise of rule is modeled on that of Christ, who revealed His veiled kingship on earth before His exaltation by enduring suffering and death in order to achieve His heavenly rule (cf. 1:5). Just as Christ ruled in a veiled way through suffering, so do Christians, which argues further against the proposal that saints do not exercise kingship until the final coming of Christ when they are exalted over their enemies.<sup>2</sup>

This is what it is to follow Jesus in the context of John 12:26, when Jesus said, “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.” We are to follow Jesus by desiring and seeking first and foremost to glorify God in what we suffer, rather than to seek first and foremost to escape our suffering.

This is important for us to understand, for there is great ignorance and error among Christians regarding the nature of our present reign in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Most Christians believe that they are “reigning” only when they are delivered from suffering, when the Lord brings our tribulation to an end. Consequently, when they are suffering, they are often confused and discouraged. They say to themselves, “I must not be right before God. It would not seem that I am reigning with Christ seeing that I have these continual, unrelenting issues and problems, in other words, tribulation.” But the Christian in this age is reigning by persevering in the midst of their tribulations in this life, not in the escape or deliverance from them. That will take place one day when we pass from this world into our state of glory with our glorified Savior and Lord.

We also might make this point regarding John’s reference to tribulation in Revelation 1:9. John wrote of “tribulation” which Christians were presently suffering (Rev. 1:9). Most evangelicals believe that they will escape a future end-time, seven year tribulation period that will come upon the world after the church is raptured. They believe that the book of Revelation is primarily a prophecy of this final tribulation. But for John, as other writers of Scripture, tribulation is what all Christians encounter in this life. John intimates that truth here. Our Lord Jesus taught His disciples, which we have already cited, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

In Revelation 1:9 John wrote of his commoradery with the Christian brethren in their tribulation. “I, John, your brother and companion (partner) in the tribulation *and the kingdom...*” There was a second cause for companionship. Not only did John regard himself in partnership with other Christians in tribulation, but he

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p. 201.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

saw that he and his readers were companions in this great enterprise of furthering the kingdom of God. They were all citizens of the kingdom of God. This, too, fosters comoradery. They not only suffered together, but they worked together for the furtherance of the kingdom of God. They longed and desired together to see the glory of God advanced. They desired and worked together to bring people to salvation, to lead people to place their faith in Jesus Christ and submit their lives to Him as their King. This was their driving goal in life, as it should be ours. To the degree that we all see our mission and long to have it realized, will be to the degree that we will increasingly see ourselves as companions. Is it any wonder that people do not feel a part of a church if there is not a well-focused mission of the church to which all have committed themselves? We are to seek first the kingdom. **Greg Beale** wrote of the sense of community that Christians experience through tribulation:

John and his community are people who even now reign together in Jesus' kingdom. But this is a kingdom unanticipated by a majority of Jews. The exercise of rule in this kingdom begins and continues only as one faithfully endures tribulation. This is the formula for kingship: faithful endurance through tribulation is the means by which one reigns in the present with Jesus. Believers are not mere subjects in Christ's kingdom. "Fellow partaker" underscores the active involvement of saiants not only enduring tribulation, but also reigning in the midst of tribulation.

...This ironic exercise of rule is modeled on that of Christ, who revealed His veiled kingship on earth before His exaltation by enduring suffering and death in order to achieve His heavenly rule (cf. 1:5).<sup>3</sup>

The manner in which Christians show forth in this life their reign with Jesus in His kingdom is through not succumbing to unbelief through their tribulation. When Christians endure their trials they show forth their co-reign with Jesus Christ. Their troubles do not result in their comromise or defection from Christ, they continue through "patient endurance", which we see next identified in this threesome. But saadly, if we look primarily for escape from our tribulation rather than glorifying God through enduring in faith through our tribulation, we will fail to see the glory of God asvanced and we will probably be quite disappointed and perhaps disillussioned what we perceive to be a "blessed" Christian life.

Now let us turn our focus upon the Lord Jesus and the nature of the sufferings which He endured.

### C. The difficulty that Jesus endured

The course that Jesus was to take was very difficult for Him. This is suggested in other places perhaps more clearly. The writer to the Hebrews wrote of Jesus.

Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, <sup>8</sup>though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. (Heb. 5:7).

And in another place in Hebrews it records of Jesus, "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2). It was a very real struggle for Him, but He came forth the victor.

This leads us to address a matter regarding the person of the Lord Jesus. First, the question has often and long been asked, "In all of Jesus' trials and troubles was Jesus Christ capable of sinning?" Some argue that He was capable of committing sin; others say that He could not have committed sin. The theological terminology that is used is that of *impeccability*. Those who claim that He could have sinned, believe that he was peccable. Those who (rightly) believe that He could not have sinned, argue for the impeccability of Christ. Here are the words of **Arthur Pink** (1886-1952) addressing this matter:

We are living in a world of sin, and the fearful havoc it has wrought is evident on every side. How refreshing, then, to fix our gaze upon one who is immaculately holy, and who passed through this scene unspoil by its evil. Such was the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate. For thirty-three years He

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 201.

was in immediate contact with sin, yet He was never, to the slightest degree, contaminated. He touched the leper, yet was not defiled, even ceremonially. Just as the rays of the sun shine upon a stagnant pool without being sullied thereby, so Christ was unaffected by the iniquity which surrounded Him. He ‘did no sin’ (1 Pet. 2:22), ‘in Him is no sin’ (1 John 3:5 and contrast 1:8), He ‘knew no sin’ (2 Cor. 5:21), He was ‘without sin’ (Heb. 4:15). He was ‘holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners’ (Heb. 7:26).

But not only was Christ sinless, He was impeccable, that is, incapable of sinning. No attempt to set forth the doctrine of His wondrous and peerless person would be complete, without considering this blessed perfection. Sad indeed is it to behold the widespread ignorance thereon today, and sadder still to hear and read this precious truth denied. The last Adam differed from the first Adam in His impeccability. Christ was not only able to overcome temptation, but He was unable to be overcome by it. Necessarily so, for He was ‘the Almighty’ (Rev. 1:8). True, Christ was man, but He was the God-man, and as such, absolute Master and Lord of all things. Being Master of all things—as His dominion over the winds and waves, diseases and death, clearly demonstrated—it was impossible that anything should master Him.

Our Lord concluded His struggle on this occasion with an affirmation of His true desire and commitment. Jesus said in prayer, “**Father, glorify Your name.**” The Father was glorified in the death of His Son. Later we will read in John 17:2 our Lord’s prayer to His Father just before His crucifixion:

Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. (John 17:2f)

When the Scriptures describe God revealing Himself to His people, they describe God as manifesting **His glory** to them. The Hebrew word translated “glory” literally means “**heavy**” or “**weighty**.” When speaking of the glory of a man, a man’s glory refers to those aspects about him which cause him to be regarded as great by others. It is that which earns him the respect of others. And so we might refer to a man’s glory as an expression of a man’s honour, power, position, success, or greatness. When we speak of God’s glory, sometimes we are referring to a visible manifestation of God’s presence through which He has revealed Himself at various times in history. To speak of His glory is to speak of a manifestation of His nature, His greatness, and His attributes in such a way that they are recognizable (visible) to mankind. The Shekenah glory of God in the Old Testament was a pillar of fire by day which was a visible manifestation of God’s presence and power before His people. The brilliance of light and the heat of the fire was a manifestation of Himself to His people.

Of course the fullest manifestation of the glory of God is in the person of His Son **Jesus Christ**. That God would reveal His glory through Christ was prophesied in the Old Testament. Isaiah first spoke of the coming of John the Baptist, and then of Jesus Who came after.

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, “Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain. And **the glory of the Lord shall be revealed**, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. (Isaiah 40:3ff)

When Isaiah wrote, “**the glory of the Lord shall be revealed**”, he was writing of Jesus who would appear to the world eight centuries after he penned those words. Years after the manifestation of Christ Jesus to the world, John the apostle wrote, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld **his glory**, **the glory as of the only begotten of the Father**,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). The book of Hebrews also writes of the glory of God in the person of Jesus when He is described as

**the brightness of His glory** and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Heb. 1:3)

And so, we see that the glory of God is most clearly and fully seen in Jesus Christ. **The longing of the believer is to know God and that longing is satisfied in Jesus Christ.** The believer sees that “in Him dwells all

the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9). When the believer sees Christ with the eye of faith, He sees God and rejoices in Him.

But here is a question that we might pose for ourselves: **Where is the glory of God most fully revealed in Christ?** It is certainly true that His very person is the revelation of God. All that He thought were God’s thoughts. Every word He spoke was a word of God. Every act that He performed God was working through Him. But some of Jesus’ words and some of His actions did not manifest to the world the glory that was His. Some of His words did not reveal God to men, but hid God’s glory from them. And although all of His actions were works of God, not all His deeds manifested the glory of God as others. But in what act of Jesus was the glory, that is, the knowledge of God most clearly and fully manifest? The answer is in **the sacrificial death of Jesus on His cross that secured the salvation of His people**. This was the primary desire, delight, and intention of our Lord Jesus as His sufferings were before Him.

Let us now consider the third division of our passage, which is...

### **III. Jesus’ appeal for help from His Father to endure His cross (12:27, 28)**

Upon our Lord announcing that the time had arrived to die, that is, to be glorified (for He said, “My hour has come”), we read of His personal struggle as He was facing His death. We read His words of distress and petition in verse 27 and His Father’s response to Him in verse 28.

“Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour?’ But for this purpose I came to this hour. <sup>28</sup>Father, glorify Your name.”

Then a voice came from heaven, saying, “I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.”

#### **A. The sufferings of Jesus Christ in His human nature**

Jesus said, “*Now My soul is troubled.*” The trouble that lie before Him now pressed upon His soul.

His soul was troubled when He would cure us of the trouble of our souls. Later He would tell His disciples, “Let not your hearts be troubled” (John 14:1). He might have said to them on that occasion, “Why should your souls be troubled and mine too?”

**Matthew Henry** wrote of our Lord’s words, verse 27, “Now My soul is troubled.”

“Now the black and dismal scene began, now were the first throes of the travail of his soul, now his agony began, his soul *began to be exceedingly sorrowful*... The sin of our soul was the trouble of Christ’s soul, when He undertook to redeem and save us, and to make His soul an offering for our sin.

Now as we enter this portion of John’s Gospel in which the sufferings of our Lord Jesus are recounted for us, issues of difficulty arise as we reflect precisely on what and how Jesus faced His cross. Of course our Lord Jesus is both fully God and fully man. He is the eternal Second Person of the Blessed Holy Trinity. He is also the Son of David according to the flesh in His human nature. Our confession of faith states the matter well:

The Son of God, the second person in the Holy Trinity, being very and eternal God, the brightness of the Father’s glory, of one substance and equal with Him who made the world, who upholdeth and governeth all things He hath made, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon Him man’s nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the Holy Spirit coming down upon her: and the power of the Most High overshadowing her; and so was made of a woman of the tribe of Judah, of the seed of Abraham and David according to the Scriptures; so that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion; which person is very God and very man, yet

one Christ, the only mediator between God and man. (John 1:14; Gal. 4:4; Rom. 8:3; Heb. 2:14, 16, 17; 4:15; Matt. 1:22f; Luke 1:27, 31, 35; Rom. 9:5; 1 Tim. 2:5).<sup>4</sup>

But when we read of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, such as here in the opening words of verse 27, we should understand that *His sufferings were those experienced by His human nature, not by His divine nature, even though His two natures were joined inseparably in His one divine person.* The divine nature of our Lord Jesus is in every way infinite and immutable. God cannot change, for He is infinitely perfect and unchanging in all of His attributes. The one attribute of God that speaks to this matter is God's *impassibility*. When we say that God is impassible, we are saying that God cannot experience pain, suffering, and cannot experience death. Therefore, these experiences of our Lord Jesus were in His human nature only. One wrote of this: "It will become more obvious that it is critical to distinguish between what Christ does according to His divine nature and what He does according to His human nature, lest suffering be attributed to the divine."<sup>5</sup>

This is a very important matter. A failure to understand this will result in wrong conceptions of our Triune God and more specifically of the deity of our Lord Jesus. Here is a word that speaks to this matter:

One point where some disagree with divine impassibility, as classically understood, is connected to the incarnation, especially with the sufferings or passions of Christ. Failing to maintain the Creator/creature distinction, among other important biblical and theological distinctions, some ascribe suffering to the divine nature of Christ and even to the Father and Holy Spirit. This is a mistake with mammoth implications.<sup>6</sup>

The human nature of our Lord Jesus underwent all manner of change, as He grew from childhood to adulthood, as He interacted with people and with events that transpired about Him. But His divine nature was in every way infinite, perfect, unchanging, glorious in every respect. When our Lord declared, "Now My soul is troubled", He was speaking of the struggle and trouble He was having in His human soul as He anticipated His sufferings and death that He would experience in His human body. We will not say more about this matter at this time. But it is important that we go on record about these issues, lest we unwittingly contribute to errant thinking about the divine nature of our Lord Jesus.

We read further our Lord's words that express the distress of His soul. Again, **verse 27** reads, "*Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.*"<sup>28</sup> *Father, glorify Your name.*"

Interestingly, John does not record in His Gospel the account of our Lord Jesus praying and struggling in the Garden of Gethsemane. But we read of His struggle here. Actually there are parallels between our Lord's words here and what is recorded of His words in Gethsemane. **J. C. Ryle** drew the comparison. He wrote,

I see in the whole event here described, a short summary of what took place afterwards more fully in Gethsemane. There is a remarkable parallelism at every step.

(a) Does our Lord say here, "My soul is troubled"? Just as He said in Gethsemane: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." (Matt. 26:38).

(b) Does our Lord say here, "Father, save Me from this hour"? Just so He says in Gethsemane: "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." (Matt. 26:39)

(c) Does our Lord say here, "For this cause came I unto this hour"? Just so He says in Gethsemane: "If this cup may not pass away from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done."

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<sup>4</sup> **The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689**, art. 8, par. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Ronald S. Baines, Richard C. Barcellos, et. al., eds., **Confessing the Impassible God; The Biblical, Classical, & Confessional Doctrine of Divine Impassibility** (RBAP, 2015), p. 213.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 217.



(d) Does our Lord say, finally, “Father, glorify Thy name”? Just so our Lord says, lastly, “The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11)<sup>7</sup>

In verse 27 we read that even in His inward struggles, Jesus was committed to doing the will of His Father. God had a purpose for Him coming into the world, even coming “to this hour”, and He would be faithful to His Father through all that was before Him. Although Jesus had performed many mighty signs through His ministry and He had declared many glorious, memorable truths in His public and private instruction, His primary purpose for which He came into this world was to suffer and die in order to secure the salvation of His people. And in the manner of His securing their salvation, and doing so in obedience to His Father who had sent Him into the world for this purpose, He would glorify the name of His Father.

## **B. The natural, human desire to escape tribulation**

Now we addressed quite clearly that we are to desire foremost to glorify God through all of the difficulties and afflictions that God in His providence has called us to experience and endure. But we should not think that it is sinful to desire or even to escape tribulation. No, it is inherent in human nature to escape pain and difficulty. It is only sinful if we compromise our Christian convictions in order to escape our troubles, violating biblical principles or commands in doing so.

There are times when it is perfectly appropriate to flee or escape that which threatens one’s health and safety. Our Lord Jesus warned and instructed His disciples,

<sup>15</sup>“Therefore when you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand), <sup>16</sup>then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. <sup>17</sup>Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. <sup>18</sup>And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. <sup>19</sup>But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! <sup>20</sup>And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath. <sup>21</sup>For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. <sup>22</sup>And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.

We understand this word of warning and instruction of our Lord Jesus was to that first generation of Jewish Christians who would later flee Judea, particularly Jerusalem, just prior to the siege of the Roman armies that began in AD 67. Luke’s parallel account makes this clear. Jesus said,

“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation is near. <sup>21</sup>Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those who are in the midst of her depart, and let not those who are in the country enter her. <sup>22</sup>For these are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. <sup>23</sup>But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! For there will be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. <sup>24</sup>And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” (Luke 21:20-24)

The abomination that resulted in the desolation of Jerusalem and its temple was the Jews rejection of the Messiah in crucifying Him. The Lord Jesus assured that His disciples would not encounter His judgment when it fell upon that generation, so they were to flee when they saw the Roman armies.

And then regarding the legitimacy to escape danger, we read of Paul not long after he had been converted to Christ and had begun to proclaim Hi among the Jews of Damascus. Here is Acts 9:

<sup>20</sup>Immediately he preached the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.

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<sup>7</sup> J. C. Ryle, **Expository Thoughts on John**, vol. 2 (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987, orig. 1869), p. 396.

<sup>21</sup>Then all who heard were amazed, and said, “Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?”

<sup>22</sup>But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

<sup>23</sup>Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. <sup>24</sup>But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. <sup>25</sup>Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket. (Acts 9:20-25)

But even our Lord Jesus changed His itinerary in order to escape the danger that the Jewish leaders posed to Him and His disciples. We read in the last chapter of John’s Gospel: “Jesus therefore no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there to the region near the wilderness, to a town called Ephraim, and there he stayed with the disciples” (John 11:54). There is nothing wrong in itself escaping danger or difficulty that one may be experiencing. And we know that it is not sinful to desire to avoid or escape difficulty or hardship because it was our Lord’s own desire that He expressed in His prayer. He said, “Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour.’ The matter does become sinful, however, when we are willing to violate the clear instruction of the Word, we are willing to be disobedient to God’s Word in order to escape the difficulty that we are experiencing. Thankfully, however, our Lord was without sin, so He continued to be obedient unto His Father even unto His death upon His cross.

### C. Jesus affirmed His Father’s will for Him to die upon His cross.

Jesus said, “*But for this purpose I came to this hour*” (12:27c). It was His certain knowledge of His Father’s will that moved Him to resolve not to desire to escape His cross, but to remain committed to die. Actually, in addition to His commitment to His Father’s will, the certain prospect of securing the salvation of His people also pressed Him forward to His cross. The prophet Isaiah had declared of Him, “He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities” (Isa. 53:11).

But just as Jesus knew that it was the will of His Father to face His own death, which thereby drove Him forward, in the same way when we are convinced that the difficult path set before us was of the Lord’s doing, we may be renewed in our resolve to continue to bear our cross. Paul wrote of this to the Christians in the church at Thessalonica. He had heard of the persecution they had experienced from their countrymen for their Christian faith. Therefore Paul sent Timothy to affirm them in their faith. He wrote these words,

Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, <sup>2</sup>and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, <sup>3</sup>that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; *for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.* <sup>4</sup>*For, in fact, we told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation, just as it happened, and you know.* <sup>5</sup>For this reason, when I could no longer endure it, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter had tempted you, and our labor might be in vain.

Apparently Paul had told them (prophetically?) that they were going to suffer tribulation, that it was in the will of God that they do so. This knowledge could serve in encouraging them to face and endure those afflictions when they came upon them.

### D. The voice from heaven (v. 28)

After Jesus expressed His desire and His resolve, “Father, glorify Your name”, we read that God the Father audibly spoke from heaven. **Verse 28** reads, “*Then a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.’*”

The Father had already glorified His own name through His Son. **Matthew Henry** stated,

(1) The name of God had been glorified in the life of Christ, in his doctrine and miracles, and all the examples he gave of holiness and goodness.

(2) It should be further glorified in the death and sufferings of Christ. His wisdom and power, his justice and holiness, his truth and goodness, were greatly glorified; the demands of a broken law were fully answered; the affront done to God's government satisfied for; and God accepted the satisfaction, and declared himself well pleased. What God has done for the glorifying of his own name is an encouragement to us to expect what he will yet further do. He that has secured the interests of his own glory will still secure them.

According to our four Gospel accounts, this is the third occasion that the Father spoke from heaven in the presence of Jesus. The first occasion was when Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River.

<sup>13</sup>Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. <sup>14</sup>And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?"

<sup>15</sup>But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him.

<sup>16</sup>When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. <sup>17</sup>***And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*** (Matt. 3:13-17)

The second occasion that God the Father spoke from heaven was on the mountain when Jesus was transfigured before the disciples who were with Him. Here is Matthew 17:

Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; <sup>2</sup>and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. <sup>3</sup>And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. <sup>4</sup>Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

<sup>5</sup>***While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"*** <sup>6</sup>And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. <sup>7</sup>But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." <sup>8</sup>When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. (Matt. 17:1-8)

And before us in John 12:28 we have the third occurrence. Here the Father declared that He had already glorified His own name through His Son. John recorded, ***"Then a voice came from heaven, saying, 'I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.'"*** We should not think that the Father was referring only those two previous occasions when He had spoken audibly from heaven. God the Father had glorified Himself in every event that had transpired in the life of His Son. From the events of Jesus' birth even through all of what had transpired through the ministry of Jesus, God the Father was glorified.

The Father did glorify His name in and through Jesus through all His past life and work, for in the entire mission of Jesus as accomplished thus far the grace, power, and blessed purposes of the Father shone out with resplendent clearness. And He will do this also in the hour now begun through the passion and the resurrection of Jesus. Note how the Father combines the past and the future as though the former is to serve as the assurance for the latter.<sup>8</sup>

Here is one more word about the Father's word from heaven:

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<sup>8</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, **The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel** (Augsburg Publishing, 1942), p. 871.

The name of the Father has been glorified by the entire ministry of Jesus (now spoken of at its end), and it is not finished. While the cross is probably to be understood as the climatic glorifying act of the Father by the Son (cf. v. 23), we may still speak of the perpetual glory distributed between the Father and the Son. But the Father's final remark, "I will glorify it again", offers confirmation that in this moment of anguish, filled with the decision to love or hate life in the world (v. 25), the Father is confident in the service of the Son; so confident that He predicts it—and His predictions never fail! The last remark by the Father, therefore, points not only to the cross but also to the resurrection.<sup>9</sup>

May the Lord infuse in each of us the great desire and longing to glorify Him above all else. May we view our tribulations as opportunities to glorify God and that they are divine opportunities to glorify Him in our lives.

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“O LORD, you are our God;  
we will exalt you; we will praise your name,  
for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure.  
(Isaiah. 25:1)

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<sup>9</sup> Edward W. Klink, III, **John**. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Zondervan, 2016), p. 553.