

SERMON ON JOHN 17 BY SAMUEL PIERCE,
SERMON 2

John 17: 2

As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou has given him.

THE whole of Christ, and all which belongs to Christ, is of the utmost importance. His life, miracles, sermons, prayers, and supplications, are infinite in perfection, worth, and efficacy. Of all they prayers our most precious Lord offered, none is equal with this before us. He is here, if I may so say, praying just before his death. He here opens his heart, and gives us a full view of it. So that we may here see how full of love it was when he made his soul an offering for sin. It is good for us to read it over in faith. It is blessed employment to be mixing faith with every part thereof. It is in this way we are indulged with most blessed views and intercourse's with our most precious Lord. The words now before us stand, as all the following to the end with the fifth verse, in close connection with the first verse of the chapter. This must be kept in view. Without it the harmony and beauty of the subject will be broken in upon. Having thus spoken, it will be necessary for me to read the former verse, and show the connection of this with it. Verse 1. These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. The everlasting covenant transactions between the Father and the Son, was such a mutual stipulation that the promises which then passed between the one and the other, were the foundation for the Mediator's faith and hope, that he should be carried successfully through the whole of his mediatorial work and office. This is the substance of the former verse, and of the prayer therein put up. Father, the hour is come. I

am to stand up, and bear all the sins of thy people in my body and soul. I am to stand up between thy justice and the sins of my people. I am to sustain the whole curse of the broken law, due to the iniquities of thine elect. I am to make my soul an offering for sin. I am to sustain the whole stroke of thy wrath. I am to endure soul travail. I am to lay down my life in obedience to thy covenant will. My heart is in the same. My whole soul rejoiceth in the full prospect of it. I rejoice in glorifying thy law and justice to the uttermost perfection. I am well pleased to glorify all thy perfections, and save my church with an everlasting salvation. Glorify me, therefore, by fulfilling thy covenant engagements and promises unto me. That on completing the whole of my work by my obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, I may glorify thee, by the full exercise of my mediatorial office in the highest heavens; there appearing and living in the presence of thy majesty, on their behalf, and for their everlasting benefit. I, as thy Son, and Mediator, request this. As thou hast appointed me to universal headship, and my mediatorial power and office extends to all flesh, to give eternal life to as many as thou hast given me, therefore I request this. If you read these verses you will see this is the spirit and connection of them.

These words, As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him, contain in them the following particulars; each of which must be particularly treated on.

First, The appointment of Christ, by the Father, to his mediatorial office.

Secondly, The extent of Christ's headship and mediatorial power. Thou hast given him power over all flesh.

Thirdly, The gift of certain persons by the Father, with special purpose and design, to partake of eternal life from Christ. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life

to as many as thou hast given him. These are the particular subjects mentioned in the words before us. May the Lord, the Spirit, be pleased to enable me to open these particulars clearly and scripturally unto you! And, First, To speak of the appointment of Christ, by the Father, to his mediatorial office.

The Essential and Co-equal Three, in the infinite Essence, have been pleased to reveal themselves in the sacred word in their covenant offices. In their covenant offices all their manifestative glory, wisdom, power, goodness, and love, is most divinely displayed. In the eternal will, council, design, purpose, and settlements of all the ways and works of God, Jehovah set up, and possessed God-man, as his treasure, before his works of old. All his thoughts, council, will, ends, and designs towards all on earth and in heaven, began and ended in him. As the essential Word, and only-begotten Son of God, he was set up as God-man, so he was to be the foundation, the head, the center of the whole creation of God. All was to be created by him. All was to be created for him. All was to have existence in him. And the very purpose of God respecting the whole creation, was in Christ. In the intuitive knowledge of God-man, all things were made. Hence the apostle saith, God created all things by Jesus Christ. Eph 3: 9. And Christ, God-man, was appointed by the Father to be the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature. He was laid as Mediator, the medium of union and communion between God and the creature. The elect were chosen in him. They were united to him. They were one with him from everlasting. He was by appointment their head, of union and communion with God. The Father, by his divine will, called him to the office of mediatorship. He was to reconcile all things in heaven and earth unto himself. The apostle sets forth Christ, in all the glory and fullness of his person, as Mediator, in the following words, in the first chapter of the Ephesians, verse 10. That in the dispensation of the fullness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth, even in him. He is the one universal head, in whom God hath summed up all things. Angels

in heaven, saints on earth, the whole election of grace, those who are of them already in heaven, and such of them as are on earth, they are all gathered up in him. They are all summed up in him. He is their head. He is the one alone Mediator of reconciliation. He hath made peace by the blood of his cross. He is the Peace Maker. He is the Prince of Peace. Yea, he is the Prince of Life. He is all this by the Father's will of appointment. He is constituted to be all this, by the council and will of God. He speaks of it in the words before us, which are an address of his to his Father. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

It is true blessedness to be led by the Holy Spirit of God into a knowledge of the subject before us. It is the Holy Ghost alone who can give us right apprehensions of it. As it pleaseth him so to do, we are made wise unto salvation, by faith in Christ Jesus. It may not be amiss here to proclaim Christ, God-man, in his royalties, perfections, and glories, as God-man, in his relation to God, in his relation to the world, in his relation to his church, as it will be preparative to leading the mind to attend to those most glorious and divine mysteries, which are the subject of the following verses. In the first chapter of the Colossians, the apostle says, of our Christ, He is the image of the invisible God. This he is, and in this relation he stands in to God. He is God and man in one Christ. He is God the Son, dwelling personally in the man Christ Jesus. And in him dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead. As to his relation to the creature it is this. He is the first-born of every creature. He is the begetter, the creator, of every creature. As to his relation to his church, he is the head of it. The apostle proves his assertions. With respect to Christ, God-man, all the nature, persons, and perfections of godhead are made known in him, and by him. As to creatures, they all received their being and existence from him. For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for

him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist, verses 16, 17. As it respects his oneness with, and relation to his people, the apostle says, And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the preeminence. Then the apostle holds up Christ in all his fullness as Mediator to his church, saying, For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell. Then he speaks of him in all the perfection of his reconciliation. And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself, by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven, verse 20. As I would not wish to crowd too much together, fearing it may burden the mind, I will therefore close this head, and proceed to the next.

Secondly, To show the extent of Christ's headship and mediatorial power, which is expressed in these words, Thou has given him power over all flesh.

We generally confine our thoughts respecting the mediatorship of Christ to that branch of it, his reconciling work. When we speak of our Lord's mediatorship, we seem usually to restrict it to his church; whilst it is as large as the whole creation, and his kingdom, as God-man mediator, ruleth over all. He is head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. Eph 1: 22-23. Christ is the fulness of nature, the fulness of providence, the fulness of grace, and the fullness of glory. He is the grace-head, and the glory-head of his church, and people. All the fulness of nature is in him. He is the head of the whole creation, both visible and invisible. He is the head of all principality and power. See Col 2: 10. He is head over all. See Eph 1: 22. He is the head of every man. I would have you know (says Paul) that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. 1st Cor. 11: 3. He is the head and fullness of all the good dispensed in Providence. For his kingdom ruleth over all. Therefore David said, Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel. Our

Father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven, and in the earth is thine: thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength to all. Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. 1st Chron. 29: 10-13. So spake also the Levites to the people, as recorded in the ninth chapter of Nehemiah. They said, Stand up, and bless the Lord your God for ever and ever: and blessed by thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou had made heaven, the heaven of heavens with all their hosts, the earth, and all things which are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worships thee. Verses 5, 6. Thus also, in the fifth chapter of Revelation, all creatures in and throughout every part of the creation, are brought in as acknowledging Christ's universal headship, and that he is king-mediator. The words I refer to are these, And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. Verse 13. Thus the mediatorial kingdom of Christ extends to the whole creation of God. All things were planned in the will. And wisdom of God, with respect to the whole creation, and Christ, as God-man, was set up to have universal empire over all. All things were created by him, and all things were created for him. He ruleth over all the angels in heaven; over all men and creatures upon earth; over all the devils and damned in hell: and none can exist without him. He displays, as Mediator, his power, wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. In the administration of his providence, he opens and unfolds the vast designs of Jehovah, in his eternal purposes and decrees concerning all creatures, and all their actions. And he will one day, having accomplished the whole will of his Father, in all his vast ends

in nature, providence, and grace, as will bring glory to godhead to the uttermost, and fill the minds of saints with wonder for ever. And also nonplus and confound all the enemies of the Lord and of his Christ; so as devils and damned men will be constrained to say, The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. Christ is the first and last of all God's thoughts and works. He is Alpha and Omega. He is the beginning of the creation of God. He is the heir of all things. He is the Prince of Life. He is Lord of all: in nature, grace, and glory. He is the Mediator of redemption. And this he speakes of in the words of my text. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. His mediatorship is a gift. It is the gift of his Father. It is given him as God-man. He was in the Father's original design, and secret will, to set forth the glory of the godhead to the creature, as far as it could be set forth. The Lord hath made all things for himself. See Pr 16: 4. Christ, God-man, was the medium between God, and the whole creation. And he was most exactly suited to be so, he being in his person God and man. There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. 1Ti 2: 5. To us (says Paul, speaking to the Corinthians) there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. 1Co 8: 6. The elect are related to every thing in Christ's headship, nature, grace, and glory. They are united to him. They are related to his person. They are interested in him, and his salvation. Not so the non-elect. Yet the extent of Christ's headship and mediatorial power is over all flesh. As thou hast given him power over all flesh. And as it is a part of his glory to have universal and absolute rule and power over all flesh, so he speaks of it as a gift bestowed on him. He here speaks to his Father. After his resurrection, he says to his disciples, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Mt 28: 18. Christ's mediatorial power over all flesh, given him by the Father, is for the benefit of the elect. He can subdue his foes. He will crush his enemies. The gates of hell shall never prevail against his gospel, his worship, his people, because he is almighty. He must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

And when all the purposes of his mediatorial power are accomplished, then he will deliver up his charge, saying, to his divine Father, Lo, I, and the children which thou hast given me. And will give to an assembled world, and in their hearing, such an account to his divine Father, of the whole process of his administration, as will bring in a fresh revenue of manifestative glory to godhead for ever. Then will take place what the apostle speaks of in these words, And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. 1Co 15: 28. Christ will never cease to be God-man, Mediator. Yet he will then cease to administer this office as he now doth. It will then be more immediately by his own person, without his word, and Spirit, and holy dispensations in providence. If Christ hath universal headship, power, and authority over all flesh, this then should comfort the church of Christ. Surely then no weapon formed against them can prosper, and every tongue which riseth against them shall, sooner or later, be condemned. It should therefore encourage real saints to strengthen themselves in the Lord their God. The person of Christ, the power of Christ, is their glory and their shield. His whose eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, will most assuredly show himself strong on the behalf of such whose hearts are perfect towards him. His headship and universal power in its vast extent, is for the real service of his beloved. He overrules all their enemies. He puts limits to their utmost rage. He so works that the wrath of man shall praise him, and he remainder of wrath he will restrain.

Christ is to his church, her Head. He is her Mediator of Union to God; he is her Mediator of Reconciliation; he is her Bridegroom, her Father, her Shepherd, her Redeemer, her Elder Brother, her King, her Lord, her Lawgiver; she is his Spouse, his Beloved, his Sister, his Body: of his flesh, and of his bones. Christ is head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

As proper views, received from the scriptures of truth, heighten in the minds of real believers the dignity, majesty, honor, and glory of Christ's person and office, so our Lord brings it into his prayer as an argument of his ability for his full performance of all mediatorial acts of grace towards, and on the behalf of his people. Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

So that I am brought to my Third particular, concerning the gift of certain persons, by the Father, to Christ the Mediator, with special purpose and design, that they should partake of eternal life from Christ. This is our Lord's express declaration to his Father. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

In the infinite mind of God, he willed to love an innumerable company of intellectual creatures of Adam's posterity, with an immutable love. Out of the love wherewith he loved them, he chose them in Christ. By this act in his infinite mind he gave them being, life, and blessedness in Christ, from everlasting. Thus, whilst all Adam's posterity received their life and being from Christ, God-man, their Creator, yet none but the elect had union unto, being, and life in Christ. So that when the fall took place, all mankind fell in Adam. Yet all did not fall alike. The non-elect fell, so as to be damned; they being left to perish in their sins. They having no relation to Christ, as God-man. He was not related to them as the Mediator of union to God. They had their all, in Adam, their nature-head. The elect had all spiritual blessings bestowed upon them in Christ their grace and glory-head. They could not lose these, because they were secured for them in Christ. Now in election, God had chosen them as his own. He was their God, they were his people; he was their Father, they were his children; he was their Shepherd, they were his sheep. He gave to them to Christ to be his bride, his chosen, his brethren, his social companions and partners, in all his

communicable grace, and glory. On the foresight of their fall in Adam, and what would be the fruit thereof, their own actual transgressions, the Father proposed to raise them up from all the ruins of the fall, upon the consideration of his Son's undertaking to perform all righteousness for them; and, as their surety, bearing all their sins in his own body on the tree, and making his soul an offering for sin. To carry all this into execution, our Jesus became incarnate. He here speaks as the true Immanuel. Speaks as the Mediator. Addresses his divine Father, agreeable to the subject now before him. And in the words before us we have a variety of particulars. He, as Mediator of the elect, addresses the Father, and speaks concerning certain persons. He speaks of what he is to bestow on them, Eternal life. And suggests how all-sufficient he was to bestow this inestimable blessing on them. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. I will aim to open them thus. We have here a great emphasis laid on God's gift of particular persons to Christ, the Mediator. This leads us to consider what took place before all worlds concerning the elect. They are styled God's own elect. Lu 18: 7. The very expression points out the singular propriety of God in them. He chose them before all others. He preferred them beyond all others. He chose them for himself; he loved them in a peculiar way and manner; he presented them to God-man, Christ, who was to be God incarnate. The Father gave them unto him, as a choice expression of his love. Under the views he took of them in their fallen state, he gave them unto the hands of Christ to be raised up from all the ruins of the fall. As all this was vastly expressive of grace. As such, Christ esteems it. And in the sixth chapter of this gospel he says, All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. Chapter 6: 37. Christ's ability to save, does not consist absolutely in his being God, but Mediator. Christ's will to save, lies under the Father's gift. All that the Father giveth (he giveth influentially in the very act to enable them to come) cometh to me, or shall come to me. And him that cometh I will in no wise cast out. He that believeth shall not perish, but have eternal life. The

ability of our redeeming Mediator, Christ's covenant mediation, as the surety of the elect, is founded on God's will. The responsibility of Christ is founded on his deity, as the Son of God. The qualifications of his sacrifice is founded upon his covenant, as Mediator. He, as such, is the man in God. The man, God's fellow, taken up into personal union, so as to be one person with the essential Word, and Son of God.

As Christ stood in this relation to his church, so he here prays to his Father in full agreement with all this. He had promise of life for them, given him before the world was. This life he was to communicate unto them. He stands forth as most ready so to do. I am willing to impart it, as thou, O Father, was to bestow it on me for them. As Christ speaks thus particularly on the subject, we learn from hence, the vast importance of it; and should learn from it to view and review every sentence which our Lord utters in this prayer. As thou hast given me power over all flesh. It is all bestowed on me with a particular view of advantage to thine elect. It is, that I should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given me. I am their life. And thou hast given me, as Mediator, to be everlasting life unto them. I am their eternal life-giving, and life-continuing, and life-maintaining head. I will most freely and fully impart unto them, according to mine office, all which thou hast communicated to me for them. To show my heart, and give full demonstration of all contained therein, I thus most freely pour out my heart unto, and before thee. I stand at the head of the spiritual world, thus to act. To impart my life, and my light, and my righteousness, and my purity, and my spirit, and my holiness, and my glory unto them. My fullness, as their Head and one only Mediator, is immense. It is an overflowing, it is an inexhaustable fullness. It is all for their use and benefit. Thou hast filled me, as Head and Mediator, that I should fill them. It hath pleased thee, that in me should all fullness dwell. Thou hast given me power over all flesh, that I should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given me. As the persons spoken of were given by the Father unto Christ, so he was to give eternal life to each, and

every one of them. A greater gift could not be bestowed. So the apostle John thought when he said, And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life. Eternal life must contain the essence of all blessings, just as eternal death contains the essence of all evils. Our Lord, speaking of himself, and the fountain of life which is in him, as God-man, says, For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself. He, as God-man, hath life as God-man, which is essential to himself; which is incommunicable. He is life everlasting. He, speaking of himself, as Mediator, says, As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live, by me. Joh 6: 57. As he, as God-man Mediator, liveth in the Father, and the Father in him, so he is the fountain of eternal life unto his church, and he bestows it on them. This he was to do when he had finished the work which the Father gave him to do. As the head of his church, he had been already, and always was the life of his people. But he was to communicate the same more abundantly after his coronation. Hence he said to his disciples, I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. Joh 10: 10. He is life eternal, and he communicates it to the minds of his people when they are dead in trespasses and sins. Agreeable to which he says, Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. Joh 5: 25. He then adds, For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself. And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. Verses 27-29. All this belongs to the headship and mediatorial office of our Lord. As Christ, by his word, conveys, and through the agency of his Holy Spirit imparts spiritual and eternal life to the souls of those whom the Father hath given him, so he will continue it in them, so that it shall be life everlasting. Agreeable to which he says, Because I live, ye shall live

also. Joh 14: 19. Our Lord having received the elect from his Father, with the express purpose and design of giving eternal life unto them, here speaks out what one great act and part of his office was, and would be when he was admitted into, and glorified in heaven. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. In which words he opens the councils of eternity; and goes on to express them more and more. So that in, and throughout the whole of this prayer, all is set forth concerning them which can ever be known on earth, or enjoyed in heaven. These words, That he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him, are expressive of the satisfaction of Christ's vast mind, in the gift of these persons to him. He suggests the gift was the fruit of grace. It was all of grace that these should be given unto him. He values the grace of his Father, thus expressed to him as Mediator. That he should constitute him to be their eternal head; that he should constitute their dependence so on him as his members, that they were to receive eternal life from him, and he was to have the honor to give and continue it unto them, with all blessings thereof for evermore. Eternal life, who can conceive of it! To have being in Christ is great; but to have eternal life added to that being, is the very essence of blessedness. To have this life in Christ, and from Christ, will consummate the blessedness of all the given ones. Here is the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, opened to the view of faith. Christ is the book of life. His name stands first in it. After him, all the names of the Father's chosen and beloved ones. They are all to receive life from Christ. It is to flow out of his fullness. It is to be, for nature and kind, the same as his own; though not to the same degree. He is to be their life. He, by his indwelling in them, is the fountain of all their spiritual life now, and will be so to them, in heaven, to all eternity. He is the life of all their grace, and he will be the life of eternal glory. It was so pleasant to the view of Christ, to be all this to the souls of the given ones, those many sons and daughters who were to be brought by him, as the captain of their salvation, that he here, in the immediate views of his laying down his life for them, makes use of it as an

argument in his address to his divine Father. For I can call the words of my text to no other than an argument, or foundation on which Christ rests for a blessed answer. I will therefore recite afresh both the verses. “These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou had given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” Raise me, O Father, up, and seat me on my mediatorial throne, that I may shine forth in all the glory, and full execution of those offices thou hast appointed me to fill up; that thereby all the ends of my mediation may be accomplished, thine given unto me, possessed of every blessing and benefit, which will flow there from to them, and thy manifestative glory be advanced thereby. I have endeavored to give the most genuine sense of these words I could. And now I leave it to the Lord, the Spirit, to glorify Jesus hereby, if it please him. Even so, O Holy Ghost. Amen, and Amen.