

## A Christmas Series: The Doctrines of Grace in the Coming of Christ

**GOD’S GIFTS FOR HIS SON**

John 17:11-19

**Intro:** Those of us who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation are referred to with different terms in the New Testament. We are called the children of God, and the sons of God. We are called believers. We are called saints. We are called the Church. We are called the righteousness of God. We are called Christians. Peter called those to whom he wrote his two epistles, “elect strangers.” He also called them pilgrims (1 Peter 2:11). Paul called the believers at Rome the “beloved of God” (Rom. 1:7).

I am sure I have not exhausted all of the titles which we as the Lord’s people can claim, but what I want to ask you this morning is, Have you ever thought of yourself, if you really are saved, as the Lord expressed it in the first verse of our text for today: “Those whom Thou hast given me.” This seems to have been a favorite expression with the Lord in referring to His people.

We have it first in this seventeenth chapter of John in verse 2. Notice it again in verse 6 –two times! Then we have it again in verse 9. See it again in verse 12. And then, although all through these verses the Lord was speaking to the Father about those who had been given to Him by the Father, we don’t come to the expression until we get down to verse 24.

But before we get to John 17 we see that the Lord used this expression in John 6:37. Turning to John 10:29 we find it again. The Apostle John quoted it in John 18:9. This is a reference to what the Lord had said to the Father in His prayer in John 17:12.

Now a good question to ask in the light of all of these passages is this: *When did God give us to Christ?* We have the answer in Ephesians 1, verses 3 through 7:

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace (Eph. 1:3-7).

In one of Paul's first epistles, 2 Thessalonians, he had this to say along the same line:

13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess 2:13-14).

Most people don't realize it but when the Lord Jesus Christ was born, God was setting in motion His redemptive purpose which had been ordained before creation itself. This is more than our feeble minds can possibly comprehend, but we believe it because it is in God's Word. And it was this that the Lord was speaking to the Father about in John 17.

And so we come to another Biblical term when we are gathering together titles or names that are used in the Bible for the people of God. *We are God's elect*. What an amazing statement this is! How it should humble us! It ought to make us fall at the feet of God in unceasing worship that He would single us out to be the recipients of His transforming grace.

Salvation had to be this way. You will remember what we learned last Sunday in speaking of the world's greatest need. It is not for democracy; it is for deliverance from sin. Man is under judgment because of sin, and yet God tells us in His Word that "there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh God" (Rom. 3:11). And "none" doesn't mean *some*, it means "none."

I did something this past week that I have never done before. I took my dictionary and looked up the word "none" to find out what it means, just like I didn't know. And I found out that it means *no one, not anyone, no person*. As an adverb it means *in no way, not at all*. This means that among all of us who are here this morning there is not a single person who has ever, or will ever, or would ever, seek God. None of us! Not

one of us! And we can extend this to Portland, and you will never find a single person in this whole metropolitan area who would ever on their own, seek God. Extend it to Oregon. And then to the United States. And then to the world. And if you could have lived, as God has, from generation to generation throughout all of human history, you would never find a single person who on his or her own initiative, would seek God – no man, no woman, no child. NONE!

More than that, everyone is a sinner, spiritually dead, incapable of understanding the Gospel of God. Go out among the people of our city. They are not seeking God. They are not interested in knowing God. They stay away from churches like ours where the Word of God is preached. Salvation is one free gift which people are not the slightest bit interested in.

What is the answer then? If man will not come to God, then our only hope is that God will come to man. And this is what happened when the baby Jesus was born. He was not an ordinary human being. He was the Son of God Who was conceived in the virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit and born as both God and Man. Since man would not and could not seek after God, the Bible tells us that Jesus Himself said, “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

Now this is pure grace. Do we know what grace means? Dear Jerry Bridges has told us many times that grace mean that God does not give me what I deserve to get, but He gives me what I never could deserve. I deserve death, and so do you, but He has given us life. That is grace.

But let me point out some very important truths about God. God didn't really have to do anything. He would have been perfectly righteous if He did not do anything, if He just let all of us go to hell. OR, God could have saved everyone, if that had been His plan. God is absolutely sovereign. He is not going to be thwarted by any human being, or by all human beings combined. But we know that that was not His plan because not everyone is being saved.

But this is what He did! God in His love and infinite grace made a choice of the people he was determined to save. He chose those He intended to save. He chose them. He elected them before the world began. And He has been saving them from the beginning of time and will go on saving them until the end of time. We know that He has His elect people in every tongue and tribe and nation. That's why we take the Gospel to the

whole world. God hasn't marked His chosen ones, so we preach to everyone believing that God in His sovereignty is going to make sure that His elect hear the Gospel, believe, and are saved. Some people believe that God is sovereign in all things except in salvation, that salvation is left up to every human being. If that were the case then no one would be saved. Remember? "There is none that seeketh after God." None! Not one!

You and I are God's gift to His Son. The Lord chose us in eternity past. It was then that He gave us to Christ, and in God's appointed time God sent the Lord Jesus into the world to die for us, absolutely securing our salvation. We will come to more of that before I finish this series. But I want you to marvel with me today that all of us who are saved, and all who ever will be saved, and all who ever have been saved, are God's gift to His Son. Amazing, isn't it? And the Father gave us to His Son to be our Savior. This is why the Gospel glorifies God. Salvation is not a work of man. It is a work of God, a work of the Godhead. God the Father chose us. Christ came to be our Savior. And it is the Holy Spirit who seeks us, convicts us of our sin and our need of Christ, and then draws us to the Savior. Jesus Christ is even the Author and Finisher of our faith. And faith comes to us by hearing the Word of God. That is why it is so important for churches to be preaching the Word instead of entertaining a crowd.

Please don't be irritated by what I am saying. Ask the Lord to show you the truth. Go to the Word and see if it does not say what I have been trying to tell you this morning – only the Word says it much better than I can say it.

But what did the Lord Jesus say in His prayer to the Father about those whom the Father had given to Him?

First, look with me at John 17:2. The Father Who has authority "over all flesh," gave Him the authority "that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him." You didn't take eternal life. You certainly didn't earn it. Neither did I. He gave it to us. Open your heart to that wonderful truth.

Then look at verse 9. What do we learn hear. We learn that the Lord prays for us. He is our main Intercessor with God. Cf. Heb. 7:25. I am thankful for all of you who pray for me, but you will understand me when I say that I am most thankful that my Lord prays for me. And I know that

you are thankful that He prays for you.

And then when we get down to verse 11 we see that the Lord prayed that the Father would keep us. The word which the Lord used for “keep” means to guard us, protect us, keep watch over us as a shepherd keeps his sheep. Cf. Jude 24 and 25, “Now unto Him that is able to keep you . . .” Cf. also John 6:37, “All that the Father giveth Me shall come unto Me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.”

And the Lord’s work in keeping us is to make us one like God the Father and God the Son are. And you will find that the remainder of this prayer of the Lord has to do from verse 20 on has to do with our need for oneness. It must be a terrible grief to the Father and to our Lord that the church is so divided.

Verse 12 tells us that this was one thing that the Lord was doing with His disciples while He was in the world. And what a job He had!

Verse 13 speaks of the Lord’s joy in the hearts of us, the people of God. He prayed that we would have it. And it is not a joy in things, but a joy in a Person. The Joy of the Lord Jesus was the joy that He had in the Father.

In verse 14 we see that the Lord had given the Word to those whom the Father had given to Him. The Word contains the truth that we are to believe, and tells us of the life that we are to live. And this makes the world hate us, meaning it rejects us. The world turns its back upon us. Twice the Lord said in His prayer, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (vv. 14, 16).

In verse 15 the Lord prayed that the Father would not at that time take them out of the world. Their lives were needed in the world. More of the elect needed to be saved. But the Lord prayed that the Lord would keep them from “the evil” one, the Devil. The world and the Devil are enemies of the truth, enemies of the Gospel, enemies of God and enemies of the people of God. But the power of God is sufficient to keep those whom He has given to His Son.

In verse 17 the Lord prayed about the present tense of salvation: sanctification. This is what God is doing in all of our lives as long as we are in this world. The next step is glorification. But sanctification only can come through the Word. Therefore, we need to read it. We need to obey

it. We need to be where we can be learning more about it. We must never neglect the Word. Don't let your Bible collect dust on a table in your home. Read it. Memorize it. Meditate on it. It is food for your soul. Job said the Word of God was more important to him than the food that he ate. We all love to eat food. May God give us even greater delight in feeding upon the Word as we have in food for our bodies.

The place of verse 18 in this prayer would lead us to understand that it is those who are growing in the Lord who are going to be the greatest influence upon the world. Cf. 1 Peter 3:15.

Verse 19 takes us back again to verse 17. But here the Lord was stating a principle. Just as He sanctified Himself in order that those whom the Father had given to Him might be sanctified, so it is as we set ourselves apart to be and do the will of God, so our lives may be used to cause others, even others who know the Lord to walk more closely in fellowship with Him.

**Concl:** There are a lot of people in this world of ours today, and God has His hand in all and over all that is taking place in the world. His purposes are being fulfilled. But do you know what has the Lord greatest attention of all that is taking place in the world? The answer is clear. It is in what is taking place in your life and my life and in the lives of His people wherever they are around the world. He is preparing us for glory.

And that brings me to the last verse that I need to mention. It is John 17:24. (Read.) Some of you are waiting impatiently for your children who have been away at school. Others of you are looking forward to being with your family members here, or you are going where they are. The feelings we have about those we love ought to help us to understand how the Lord feels about all of us. He wants us home! None of us really understands how much the Lord loves us, but we know a lot about it because we are numbered among those whom God gave to His Son for our salvation before time began. Let us love Him more, and worship Him with all of our hearts, and live here on earth for His glory, trusting Him to use us to reach others in the world who were given to Jesus when we were, but who have not learned the good news yet.