

TUESDAY BIBLE CLASS

A Study in John 13-17

John 17:1-26

March 24, 2008

Intro: We come in this chapter to a prayer which is uniquely *the Lord's prayer*. Although we usually give that title to the prayer where the Lord was teaching His disciples how to pray, the prayer which begins with the words, "Our Father, which art in heaven . . . ," was a prayer that our Lord did not need to pray because it sought from God the forgiveness of sins. This prayer in John 17, on the other hand, was a prayer that no one but our Lord could pray. Erdman in his commentary quoted Melancthon who said, "There is no voice which has ever been heard, either in heaven or in earth, more exalted, more holy, more fruitful, more sublime, than this prayer offered up by the Son of God Himself (p. 142). Erdman himself said, "If we wish one unanswerable argument to prove the Deity of Christ, it can be supplied in this single chapter of John" (p. 143). Matthew Henry wrote that "this was a prayer after a sermon, a prayer after sacrament, a family prayer, a prayer before a sacrifice, a prayer which was a specimen of Christ's intercession" (quoted by Ryle, II, 414). This is why many expositors have referred to this prayer as our Lord's High Priestly prayer. Ryle also quoted John Calvin who said, "Doctrine has no power, unless efficacy is imparted to it from above. Christ hold out an example to teachers, not to employ themselves only in sowing the Word, but by mingling prayers with it, to implore the assistance of God, that his blessing may render their labor fruitful" (*Ibid.*)

We have several references in the Gospels to times when the Lord prayed, and sometimes we are told briefly what He prayed about. But this is by far the longest of our Lord's prayers that we have any record of. This only should convince us of its importance.

In several commentaries I have run across an outline of this chapter which seems to me to represent very accurately the content and divisions of this wonderful prayer. I don't know who first wrote it down, but it is easy to confirm that these are the three main points. There are three main divisions:

- I. Our Lord prays for Himself (17:1-5).
- II. Our Lord prays for the apostles (17:6-19).
- III. Our Lord prays for all future believers (17:20-26).

Let us take the time right now to read through this prayer, and I hope that all of us will read it many more times during the time we are studying it. It would be well worth our time to commit it to memory. Ryle pointed out how frequently the Lord mentioned the world – almost one time for every verse, 19 times.

(Read John 17:1-16.)

This should be a pattern for us in our praying – for ourselves, for our immediate family and church, and for believers throughout the whole world, and those who are yet to be saved.

Now let us begin the exposition of this sacred prayer. Our first point will be,

I. OUR LORD PRAYS FOR HIMSELF (John 17:1-5).

Let us remember as we read these words that they are the words of *the Man* Christ Jesus. He was the Son of God in perfect human flesh. His incarnation was a major part of His humiliation. Our Lord had come for two major reasons: First, to reveal God – the final and complete revelation of the eternal God; and second, to die as a holy Substitute for sinners. The first of these two works had been completed. The second was immediately before Him. And the thought of what was to come, was very much upon our Lord's heart. We know that the apostles were aware that our Lord had given much time to prayer during His earthly ministry, and that they had heard brief prayers from Him. But they had never heard such a long prayer from Him.

We don't know where the Lord was when He prayed this prayer, but it seems that it was in a part of His walk with them to the Garden of Gethsemane. In the Upper Room He had washed their feet. They had observed the Lord's Supper together, and the Lord had in the Upper Room, and on their way to Gethsemane where they had often gone together, told them all that was on His heart to tell them. After saying what He did in the last verse of John 16, verse 33, He began to pray. Obviously the apostles listened in silence. No one spoke a word while He was praying. We can imagine that He stopped, turned His eyes toward heaven, and began to pray. It must have been a very sacred moment both for the Lord and for His apostles. The Apostle John probably would not have mentioned that the Lord lifted up His eyes toward heaven, if that had not been a most impressive moment for all of the apostles. It must have been wonderful to hear our Lord teach, but to see Him prepare to pray by lifting up His eyes, must have been a very sober moment.

Bishop Ryle had this to say about this particular moment:

This sentence shows that bodily gestures in prayer and worship of God are not altogether to be overlooked as unmeaning. There is a decent and reverent manner and gesture which suits the action of addressing God. It also seems clearly to show that the prayer was prayed before witnesses. John writes as one describing what he saw and heard.

And then Bishop Ryle added these words:

It is perhaps too much to say that the expression proves the prayer to have been in the open air. A person may look upward and heavenward even in a room. Yet it certainly rather increased the probability that our Lord was in the open air (p. 416).

Marcus Rainsford, who wrote a whole book on John 17 had this to say about this moment in our Lord's life:

The Lord Jesus Christ in prayer! What a wonderful theme for study and contemplation! Prayer was the messenger He was wont to send on all His errands, and in this He is an example to us. By prayer He held His constant intercourse with heaven; and we have no better way of doing so. Prayer was the arrow of Christ's deliverance, and the shield of His help (p. 35).

These details with which the Apostle John began this important chapter, are all important, but that which is most important is the prayer. It is important for all of us, when we pray, to remember the One to Whom we are coming, and to assume a posture and an attitude which is proper when we are approaching the only God, the sovereign God, of heaven and earth, of time and eternity. But how did our Lord address God? Simply by the title, "Father." I believe that we have evidence from Scripture to be able to say that there is nothing that delights the heart of God any more than when we simply begin our prayers with, "Father." It speaks of a relationship, a very intimate relationship. After our Lord's resurrection and before His ascension back to His Father, when Mary Magdalene was overjoyed to find the Lord alive and was inclined to keep Him, it was on that occasion that He told her that He had not yet ascended to His Father, and then He added, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God (John 20:17). Just think! by the miracle of salvation not only did Mary Magdalene have the same Father Whom the Lord Jesus had, but those very words apply to our relationship to God as well. When the Lord was teaching His disciples to pray, He said, "When you pray, say, "Our Father." The apostles had a hard time writing their epistles with address the Lord as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Notice that this is what our Lord called God all through this prayer. In verse 5, "And now, O Father." In verse 11, "Holy Father." And in verse 21, "Father." In verse 24, "Father." In verse 25, "O righteous Father." Once He called His Father, "the only true God" in verse 3. But evidently calling God, "Father," gets His attention and brings from Him the answers we seek. It was a title in which our Lord in His humanity was expressing His love, and His submission, and His trust in His heavenly Father. There is so much in this title, Father, that we need to be looking forward to the next time the Lord mentioned His Father in this book and from this chapter, that we might learn to revere God as our Father, worshiping Him "in Spirit and in truth," and learning more of

the riches to be found in that very precious word, "Father."

But what came next in our Lord's prayer?

He said to His Father, "The hour is come." What hour was He talking about? It was "the hour" that the Father and His Son had been looking ahead to since before the beginning of time. It was the hour when the Son would make His soul an offering for sin. It was the hour when He would put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. It was the hour in which the Father would lay upon His Son the iniquity of us all. It was the hour in which death would be swallowed up in victory. Here the Lord Jesus was talking to the Father in prayer about the Gospel.

But let me ask you a question: Didn't the Father know that the hour had come, or, if the time had come, was there any possibility that the Father had forgotten it? If He knew it, why did the Lord Jesus mention it to Him?

Let me ask you another question: Can you tell the Lord anything that He does not already know? Or, is it ever possible for the Lord to forget anything that He once knew? There is one thing that the Lord forgets. When He forgives our sins, He forgets them. But He never forgets what He has ordained for us; He never forgets a single promise that He has given to us.

So the Lord did not say to the Father, "the hour has come," because He did not know it, or because it had slipped from His mind. But He wants us to come to Him and tell Him what He already knows so that He will know that we believe that He cares, and that He can help us when no one else can do for us what we need. "The hour" for the Lord was to be a dark hour, a very dark hour, the darkest hour the world had ever known, or will ever know, when the Son of the Father was to be made sin for us at a cost which even yet cannot be expressed in words. It is beyond calculation.

The Lord was headed for Gethsemane. There He would take Peter, James, and John with Him into the inner part of the Garden where He had gone with them many times before. There the burden of our sin was upon Him. It made Him sweat drops of blood in His agony, and He even cried out that if there any other way for Him to fulfil the mission upon which the Father had sent Him, that the Father would take that awful cup of suffering and death from Him. But when the burden was upon Him at its worst, He told the Father, "Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done."

Don't read hastily over those words, "Father, the hour is come!" There was no sorrow like His sorrow. If we can have any understanding of those words, we will have some idea of how terrible sin is, any sin, to the Son of God and to His Father.

But what did the Lord Jesus want the Father to do for Him? What was His request? You have it right there is verse 1. When the Lord started to pray, it didn't take Him any time at all to get to the request that He had for the Father. Here it is: "Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." What was the Lord Jesus asking His Father to do? What does "glorify Thy Son" mean?

Jesus Christ would be glorified when it would become apparent that He truly was the Son of God, that although He had come to earth as a Man, yet He continued to be in the fullest sense of the word, the eternal Son of the living God, God manifest in human flesh. The Lord Jesus wanted people to know who He was? Why did He want people to know Who He was? The Apostle John would tell us why when he wrote out his main purpose for writing the book of the Gospel which carries His Name. I am speaking of those two verses at the end of John, chapter 20, verses 30 and 31. Let me read them to you. Here they are. Most of you could probably quote them from memory. John wrote:

30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this

book:

31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:30-31).

Let us consider another question at this point. It is this: Why did the Jews and Gentiles join together to kill the Lord Jesus Christ? I know that it was prophesied that they would, but I am not thinking about this from the divine point of view. If you had asked people in that mob yelling at our blessed Lord on the Cross, what were they saying?

Let me take you to the Gospel of Matthew and let us read what the mob was saying all around the Cross. I am reading Matthew 27:39-44:

39 And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,

40 And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.

41 Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said,

42 He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.

43 He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.

Let's go back to the Gospel of John. I want to read to you from John 5:18. This, too, tells us why the people wanted to kill the Lord Jesus, and why eventually they did. Listen to John 5:18:

18 Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

The Jews and Gentiles killed the Lord Jesus Christ because He claimed to be Son of God. John wrote his Gospel, let me remind you again, and notice carefully what John said because most people don't really see what John said, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through His Name." Do you see what John was saying here? He was saying that the person who really believes that Jesus is the Son of God, "and that believing, by that same faith, they will have life through His Name.

When the Lord Jesus prayed, "Glorify Thy Son," He was saying in so many words, "May the result of what I am to go through in this hour lead in some special way that people will believe that I am the Son of God. You see, that is the issue!

Now let me ask and answer another question. Did God answer the Lord's request? What did God do in addition to all of our Lord's miracles, and all of His wonderful teaching, and even from His very character, to show that He was the Son of God. Turn with me now to Romans 1, and I will show you God's answer to that petition the Lord brought to Him here in the very first verse of John 17. Here is your answer:

1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)

3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:1-6).

By the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, God declared that the Lord Jesus Christ was His Son.

Let me give you some verses that give us the emphasis regarding salvation:

- 1) John 3:18:
18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.
- 2) 1 John 4:15: “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.”
- 3) 1 John 5:5: “Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”

The main issue in salvation is whether or not people believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. If they really believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, they are saved because it is the fact that He died as the Son of God that gives saving value to His death. People who from the heart believe that Jesus is the Son of God, have no trouble in believing why He died.

But we are not quite finished with verse 1 of the marvelous prayer. The Father glorified His Son by raising Him from the dead. The resurrection Christ establishes the Deity of Christ. The character of the Lord is proved by His resurrection. But the resurrection of Christ also glorifies God, and so God is glorified by Christ which is the meaning of the statement “that Thy Son may also glorify Thee.” It was God who sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. God was active in all of salvation. And so with Christ glorified, which means that He is shown to be the Son of God by His resurrection, God is also glorified. Salvation is all designed for the glory of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Spirit.

So I ask another question: Can anyone be a Christian who does not believe in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, that He is the eternal Son of the living God? Absolutely not. If Jesus Christ is not the Son of God, then He is not the Savior. Who He is determines the value of what He did.

March 31, 2008

17:2 Verse 1 of this holy prayer sounded the keynote of our Lord’s prayer. When we say that He prayed for Himself in the first five verses, we do not mean that the Lord was self-centered as He faced the hour which had come. He wanted to be glorified in order that He might glorify the Father. Let me give you a quotation from Charles Erdman which summarizes what we had last week in verse 1. This is what he said: To “glorify” one is to make one known; Jesus desires to be made known in His true character, as the divine Son of God, as the Messiah, as the Savior of the world. The manifestation all centered in “the hour” which had come . . . By “the glory” of the Son, the glory of the Father was secured. God was never so fully revealed in all His justice and love and holiness and grace as by “the hour” with which we are now concerned” (p. 144).

We can truthfully say that “the hour,” including the suffering and death of Christ, as well as His resurrection, was an “hour” of revelation. It was a time when the Son was revealed as never before in His life, and it was a time when God was revealed in the fulness of His divine character – as Erdman has said, of “His justice and love and holiness and grace.” Jesus was revealed as the Lord, the Savior, the long-awaited Messiah, and as God in human flesh. We are continually exhorted by wise teachers of the Word that we need to know God, and that we need to know Christ. For such knowledge there is no better place to go than to the Cross and the empty tomb. The heart of God is revealed at the Cross, and at the empty tomb, and there, too, we see the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The first thing that we need to learn about God and Jesus (because here we are speaking of *the Man* Christ Jesus, that is, the Son of God in His humanity), is that God gave Him “power.” The word that the Lord Jesus used here was the Greek word for *authority* - ἐξουσία. This is the word that the Lord Jesus used when He

spoke to His disciples just before His ascension, as we read in Matthew 28:18, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth . . .” He meant that *all authority* had been given to Him in heaven and in earth. And here in John 17:2 we learn Who gave Him that authority, if there could be any doubt in our minds. And we must understand this if we are to know God. “All authority” is sovereign authority, the highest authority. No one has greater authority than God, and He has commissioned *the Man* Christ Jesus with that same authority. It extends from heaven to earth, and throughout both of these domains. It includes all creation, everything and everyone in heaven and in earth, not only men but also angels, elect angels and fallen angels. The One Who described Himself as “meek and lowly in heart,” is the mighty Sovereign over all the earth. And He reigns as by the authority given to Him by the Father. He has not taken His throne as yet, but He is sovereign today. He is sovereign over you and He is sovereign over me. He is sovereign over our country, and He is sovereign over the world. He is sovereign over the Devil and He is sovereign over the Church and over Israel. He is sovereign over the Disunited Nations and He is sovereign over the Arab nations. He is sovereign over the Democrats and He is sovereign over the Republicans, and the Independents too. Although they don’t know it, He is sovereign. He is sovereign over John McCain and Hilary and Barak. He is sovereign over the weather. He is sovereign over time. Form the habit of telling yourself that wherever you look or whatever you think about, God is sovereign, and so is the Lord Jesus Christ. What a surprise people are in for when they learn what we know now from the Word of God. The authority of God which He has given to His Son is an authority that is “over all flesh.” That means exactly what the Lord intended for it to mean when He spoke these words. There has never been a person who has ever lived who has not been under the sovereign authority of God and Christ. And that is still true today.

But for what purpose did the Father give all authority to the incarnate Christ. Was it to make all of us healthy, wealthy, and wise? No, it was that “He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.” Now there is a lot of truth in that statement.

First of all, the sovereignty of God and of Christ is concerned primarily with eternal life. What is eternal life? We are told by our Lord in verse 3 of this prayer:

3 And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom Thou has sent (John 17:3).

The Apostle John wrote many years later after he heard the Lord pray these words in John 17,

20 And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

And then immediately afterwards, and ending the epistle of 1 John, the Apostle John said,

21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen (1 John 5:20-21).

What, then, is eternal life? Eternal life is Christ. It is knowing God through Christ. It is being in God and in Christ. And such people know that every other religion is false. To worship any other is to engage in idolatry. And idolatry brings the judgment of God, not life, neither here nor hereafter.

Eternal life is union with Christ and with God. The Apostle John also wrote a few verses before he concluded the epistle from which we have been reading. Listen as I read 1 John 5:11-12:

11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

Obviously “eternal life” is life that never ends. When you have it, you can never lose it.

How do we get eternal life? The Lord in His prayer said that this eternal life is a gift, a gift from God through Christ. Nobody deserves it. You can’t work for it. You can’t buy it. The only way you can get it, is as a gift! The Bible says this over and over again. Cf. John 3:16; Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:8-9, are some examples.

But to whom do God and Christ give the gift of eternal life? They are by Christ, as our verse tells us, “to as many as Thou hast given Him.”

Have you notice in your reading of John 17 that this expression, “to as many as Thou hast given Him,” occurs no less than seven times in this, our Lord’s prayer. Let me point them out for you.

- 1) Here in verse 2.
- 2) and 3) In verse 6 we read, “I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world . . . and Thou gavest them Me.”
- 4) In verse 9 – “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me.”
- 5) In verse 11 our Lord prayed, “Holy Father, keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou hast given Me.”
- 6) In verse 12 He said, “Those whom Thou hast given Me I have kept.”
- 7) Finally, in verse 24, “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.”

Who was the Lord talking about when He spoke of those whom the Father had given to Him? In verse 6 the Lord gave a hint when He said, “Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me.” These can be none other than those who were “chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). Also in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 we read these words:

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.

These are the elect of God, chosen of God for salvation, given to Christ, that He might die for and then give the gift of salvation. God is not only sovereign in all of creation, in the heavens and in the earth, *but He is sovereign in salvation! Man does not seek God. God is the One Who seeks man. And He seeks those whom He chose before the foundation of the world, and He sent His Son specifically to die for those whom He had chosen.* The Bible tells us that “there is none that seeketh after God.” That is why the Father chose those who are to be saved, and the Lord Jesus came “to seek and to save that which was lost.”

If you have not understood the doctrine of election, I hope the Lord will open your heart to this wonderful truth. God was not obligated to save any of us. If Christ had died for all people without exception, then all people would be saved. But we know that not all people are saved. The promise is that “whosoever will may come and drink of the water of life freely,” but we know that when people come, it is because they are being “drawn,” “called,” by God through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We don’t know who the elect are. That is why we are commissioned to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creation.

Many of our hymns reflect this great truth. We sing, “O happy day! That fixed my choice on Thee, my Savior and my God.” “I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew, He moved my heart to seek Him, seeking me.” If it was by our own will that we sought the Lord, then we would have something to glory about. Let me give you two more verses from John 6 before we move on to verse 3 here in John 17. First, John 6:37:

37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. And then, John 6:44:

44 No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

17:3 In this verse we have our Lord’s own definition of eternal life. It ought to be of interest to us that our Lord, as our Savior, and our Mediator, does not dwell in this prayer on what we have been saved from. Salvation is defined in terms of knowing God and knowing Christ. The word *sin* does not appear in the prayer.

The Lord does pray that the Father would “keep them from the evil,” meaning *the Evil One*, who is the Devil. But the emphasis throughout is on their relationship to God and to Christ, and the sanctifying power of the Word in their lives as He prayed for “the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world.” We might say that this prayer is a commentary on the way the Apostle Paul spoke of our salvation in 1 Corinthians 1:9, “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” So the emphasis in our Lord’s prayer is not what we were saved *from*, but what we are saved *unto*! Our need as the people of God is to know Him, to know Christ, to walk in fellowship with them, and to experience the sanctifying power of the Word of God in our lives as a result of our relationship with God. And this is brought out in our Lord’s definition of eternal life: “And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou has sent.”

The key word in verse 3 is “know,” “know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent.” They already knew the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior. But they needed to know Him as their Life. Their lives needed to be characterized by “increasing in the knowledge of God.” This was Paul’s burden for the believers at Colosse as we learn from Colossians 1:10:

10 That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

The Apostle Peter also saw this as the basic and primary need of the believers to whom he wrote his epistles. In the last verse of his second epistle we read this in 2 Peter 3:18:

18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

Our problem, and the problem that most Christians have, is that we don’t know the Lord the way we ought to know Him. We often say that the Bible is a revelation from God, but also a revelation of God. But we spend most of our time reading it as a revelation from God, and forget that it was mainly written as a revelation of God – that through the Word we might daily be growing in our knowledge of God. It is wonderful to know Christ as our Savior, but do we know Him as our Life? Do we know the Lord Jesus in the way He illustrated our relationship with Himself back in John 15 where He taught the disciples that He was the Vine, and that they were the branches? Do we really know that “without Him we can do nothing”? I think it was the Navigators who had the motto: “To know Him, and to make Him known.” The Apostle Paul was probably expressing the very heart of his relationship with our Lord when he wrote in Philippians 3:7-15. He had been writing about the things that were the most important to him before he was saved. But after he was saved, this was his primary interest:

7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

To Paul the difference between being a Jew as compared with being a Christian, was Christ. It opened a whole new world for him. It completely transformed. The passion of his heart was to know Christ, not just as his

Savior, but as his very Life. This is what he was talking about in Galatians 2:20. (Quote.) This is what he was talking about in the verses we had at the beginning of Colossians 3 last Sunday, the first four verses:

- 1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.
- 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.
- 3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.
- 4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory (Col. 3:1-4).

Do you know that old hymn that has these words?

O Christ, in Thee, my soul has found,
And found in Thee alone,
The peace and joy I sought so long,
The bliss 'til now unknown.
Chorus:
Now none but Christ can satisfy,
None other Name for me.
There's love, and life, and lasting joy,
Lord Jesus, found in Thee.

The Lord saved us because He loved us and wanted us for Himself. Obviously the thing that the Lord desires the most from us, is our love, and that we want Him.

Marcus Rainsford has this to say about this verse:

What a lifelong study these words unfold to the believer born of the Spirit and taught of God. Sweet to study Him here – it is life begun; it will be glory to study Him hereafter, when we shall know even as we are known. The knowledge of which Christ speaks is not an intellectual, speculative theoretical knowledge of doctrines, but an experimental, heart-affecting, life-influencing acquaintance with the only true God and Jesus Christ Whom He has sent (p. 65).

Thayer in his Greek Lexicon says that the word our Lord used in John 17:3, **γινώσκωσιν**, preceded by **ἵνα**, is “a knowledge based upon personal experience.” It is a knowledge which is the result of personal fellowship with God and with Christ.

Let me close my comments on verse 3 with these words from 2 Peter 1:2-8:

- 2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,
- 3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:
- 4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.
- 5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;
- 6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;
- 7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.
- 8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter speaks of growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Paul speaks of “increasing in the knowledge of God.” Whatever knowledge we have, however well we may know the Lord, there is always more to be known growing out of our daily fellowship with both God and Christ.

April 7, 2008

Review: Let me remind you that there are three main divisions to this divinely inspired prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the first five verses He prayed for Himself. In verses 6 through 19 (fourteen verses) He prayed for His apostles. In verses 20 through 26 (7 verses) He prayed for all who had believed in Him, and for all future believer. So we can say that in the last seven verses He was praying for *us*! Thus far we have gotten down to verse 4, but I want to begin by reading the first five verses. (Read.)

In verse 1 we see how our Lord addressed God – just the simple, but very wonderful, “Father.” From the NT especially we see that this is how God loves for us to address Him, that is, if He truly is our Father through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord realized that the hour of His death was near when He said, “The hour is come.” He was not speaking of a twenty-four hour period (it was probably less than that when He would die), but He was speaking about the period of time that He had entered which ultimately would result in His resurrection from the dead. But obviously it was His approaching death that was troubling Him. As Charles Simeon said in his message verse 4, “Here we have a scene such as never occurred before or since” (Vol. 14, p. 116). Our Lord was concerned that His glory might be unveiled. It had been covered to a great extent from the moment He was born. But he longed to have His glory unveiled, so to speak, that He, in turn, might glorify the Father. But this He probably meant that God would be exalted even further before men when people realized what an infinitely important thing that God had done in sending His own Son into the world. The Apostle Paul had this in mind when he wrote to the church at Rome, “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all . . .” (Rom. 8:32).

In verse 2 we see that the sovereign God, Who eternally has possessed all “power” (the word in Greek is *authority*), commissioned His Son with that same authority “that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou (God) hast given Him.” So the Lord’s mission on earth had to do with eternal life, which is salvation. But this gift of salvation had to do with those whom the Father had given to Him. These are the chosen ones of God, the elect. So the Father had chosen those who were to be saved, and had given them to the Lord Jesus to save. We need to note these words carefully. God did not send His Son to save everyone. If that had been the Father’s will, He could have saved everyone. But that was not His will. And we have no right to raise questions about what God’s plan was. He was not obligated to save anyone. So, if He decided to save some, but not all, He had that authority.

In verse 3 our Lord expressed what eternal life was (and is): it is to “know . . . the only true God, and Jesus Christ” Whom God had sent.

For just a moment I want you to notice the word “that” which you will see in verses 1, 2, and 3. It is a word which indicates the purpose, or the intent, for which something, has been done, is being done, or shall be done. In verse 1 the Lord Jesus asked the Father to glorify Him, the Son, in order that He, the Son, might glorify the Father. In every generation there have always been other gods which people have worshiped. In OT days and years there were many, many different gods. But one of the messages that was sounded by the prophets of the OT was that God, Jehovah, was the one true God. As far back as Moses’ day, we see that this is what God sought to teach His people. Cf. Deuteronomy 4:35-36:

35 Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God; there is none else beside him.

36 Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he shewed thee his great fire; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire.

And then a few verses later we read in this in Deuteronomy 4:39:

39 Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.

In Isaiah 45:5-7 we read these words:

5 I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:

6 That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is none else.

7 I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.

In that same forty-fifth chapter of Isaiah we have these additional words along this line:

18 For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord; and there is none else (Isa. 45:18).

And the in verses 20-22 of the same chapter, this is what we read:

20 Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save.

21 Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the Lord? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.

22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

In Psalm 19:1-3 we are told:

1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.

2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

3 There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.

This all leads me to say that everything that God has ever done, from the creation of the heavens and the earth, to the small details in your life and mine, He has done for His own glory. But what do we mean for God's glory? *We mean that He has done it so that we would recognize not only that He is God, but that He is the one and only true God, and that we would seek Him and know Him and worship Him as the one and only true God! And the same thing is true as far as the Gospel is concerned. God sent His Son into the world that we might know not only His Son, but God the Father also.* This is what the Lord was praying about in verse 3.

And this was what the Apostle Paul was rejoicing in as he wrote to the believers in Thessalonica:

8 For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

9 For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:8-10).

We must never overlook the fact that the Gospel declares the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, but it declares also the Deity of God, and declares what we all believe that God is uniquely God. All other gods are false gods. All other religions (if we should call the Christian faith a religion) are false.

But now let us move on to the fourth verse in this special prayer.

17:4 The Lord said here to the Father, "I have glorified Thee on the earth." The Lord Jesus Christ is the only One Who has ever or could ever make this statement. So often, if only in our hearts, we do things for our own glory. We do things hoping that people will think more highly of us than they ought to think. The first way in which Christ glorified God was in His Person. Cf. John 1:14 and 14:7-9.

The Lord Jesus glorified God in the miracles He performed. Cf. John 3:1-2:

1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

See also the story of the man who was healed of his palsy. His friends had to let him down through the roof into the house where the Lord was. There were so many people in the house that there was no other way to get that sick man to the Lord. After he was healed and had picked up his bed to go home, this is Luke said the man who was healed, did: He "departed to his own house glorifying God" (Luke 5:25).

Luke tells us about a blind man (Mark says his name was Bartimaeus) who was sitting by the roadside begging when the Lord Jesus came by. He heard a crowd passing by, and he asked what it meant. The people told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. He called the Lord, "the Son of David," and cried out for mercy. The Lord asked the people to bring him to Him. Then He asked Bartimaeus what he wanted. He wanted to receive his sight. And then we read this in Luke 18:43:

43 And immediately he received his sight, and followed him, glorifying God: and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise unto God.

People did not always recognize Who our Lord was, but they knew that the miracles He performed had to show that He was from God.

After the Lord healed the man who was born blind, the Jews sought to discredit the Lord. But the man who had been blind, responded to them in these words which you will find in John 9:30-33:

30 The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.

31 Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.

32 Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind.

33 If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.

He glorified the Lord by His teaching. The Lord Himself referred to this here in His prayer in verse 8. (Read.) The Lord Himself spoke of how glorified God in His teaching. One classic passage on this is John 7:14-18:

14 Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.

15 And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?

16 Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.

17 If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

18 He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

As a final verse on how the Lord glorified God in His teaching, see John 14:10.

10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

Next the Lord said here in verse 4, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." Actually our Lord's work in coming to the earth was not yet finished, but in the language of heaven to say that something will be done, is positive assurance that it will be done. Future prophecy can be accepted as fulfilled prophecy. The promises of God are as certain as the providences of God are as seen in history. A good example of this is to be seen in the teaching of Romans 8:28-30:

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

(Explain how “glorified” can be stated in the same tense as “did predestinate . . . called . . . justified . . .”)

Bishop Ryle quoted Augustine in the passage I read now from Ryle’s commentary. He said,

On the use of the past tense here instead of the future, Augustine remarks, “Christ saith He has finished that which He most surely know He *will* finish. Thus long before in prophecy he used verbs of the past tense, when that which He said was to come to pass after many years. ‘They pierced my hands and My feet,’ not they *will* pierce” (II, 421).

So the Lord was yet to die. And after He died, He would be raised from the dead. Then His work in this world would be finished. Even before He died, as He was on the Cross dying, one of the seven things that He said was, “It is finished.” He actually was finishing it, but the outcome was so certain that He could say that it was “finished.”

But there was another aspect of the work that the Father had sent Him to do which was finished. As I have mentioned many times, Christ came to reveal God – the final and most complete revelation of God which had ever, or will ever, be given. His words, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30), is evidence of this. They are not one in Person, but one in nature, one in essence, one in Deity. The Lord Jesus was the Member of the Godhead Who became a Man, and He did so without ceasing to be the Son of God. And He proved it by His perfect life. He did not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it, that is, to keep it perfectly so as to show that He was perfect and thus qualified perfectly to become the Savior of the world. And surely one of the main reasons for His public life, as short as it was in terms of years, was like the Passover Lamb which was kept for four days before it was sacrificed to make sure that it was “without spot or blemish.” So our Lord lived under the eyes of men, many of them hostile to the limit in their hatred and opposition to Him. But before all men, friends and enemies, He showed Himself to be without sin. The Father sent the Son to do a complete work of salvation. There is nothing that man can add to what Christ has done in order to be saved; there is nothing that needs to be done. He offered a perfect sacrifice which rendered all other sacrifices, such as were under the Law, fulfilled. The penalty for our sins has been paid in full. All charges against us have been forgiven, and will be remembered against us no more. Christ came as a Man, a perfect, sinless, holy, Man because all other men are sinners and under the judgment of God. And so we can sing:

I need no other argument; I need no other plea,
It is enough that Jesus died, and that He died for me.

Do we need to be reminded that we cannot make either of these statements in truth? We have no perfect record regarding sin, or regarding obedience. And as we look behind in our lives, there have been many things that we have left undone, and many things which we have done which we wish we had not done.. And when it comes time for us to go to be with the Lord, there will still be things undone in our lives, or things not well done. But we can be thankful that it is

5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

7 That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:5-8).

But that is not all that Paul had to say to Titus. He went on to say this:

8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men (Titus 3:8).

This is the same order that he gave in Ephesians 2:8-10:

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

And let me add a word which Paul wrote to the Philippians in Philippians 2:12-13:

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

What does it mean to do what God calls “good works”? It is not primarily preaching, or teaching, or witnessing, or serving others, although these are involved in doing good works. But what our works are primarily are our obedience to the will of God as it is revealed in the Word of God. It is obedience and faith, faith in God and Christ and the Holy Spirit which give power to our serving and preaching and teaching and witnessing. It is by our obedience to God and faith in God that we “do of His good pleasure.” By obedience we work out our salvation.

But now let us move on to John 17:5.

17:5 Here the Lord Jesus reverted to the request that He presented to the Father in verse 1.

We certainly are standing on holy ground in these verses. How gracious it was of God to allow us to see what was on the heart of the Lord Jesus as He faced the Cross. Our Lord was a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. I doubt if anyone has ever been able to even approach what it meant to our blessed Lord to become both our High Priest and the Offering which He presented to God for our salvation. He was touched with all the feeling of our infirmities. He was tempted in all point like we are. And therefore we know that He suffered more than we will ever suffer in order to secure for us the salvation which we so richly enjoy. And I wonder from these first five verses of our Lord’s prayer if He, in His humanity, was wondering if He was made sin for us, if the Father laid upon Him the iniquity of us all, if He was made a curse of us, if He suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, I wonder if He wondered in His humanity, if things could ever be again with Him and His Father like they had been from before the foundation of the world. Is this why He prayed, “And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was”? Look what our sin does to us. It weakens us. It humbles us. It robs us of true joy. It makes us guilty. It shames us. It condemns us before God. And for those who do not turn to Christ, they are condemned to an eternity in hell. Was the Lord in His humanity wondering if He was charged with our sins, and made to suffer for them, how would it affect His relationship with the Father afterwards? Can any of us imagine what the Lord’s voice sounded like when He said, “O Father”? Was all of this a part of the reason that the Lord took Peter and James and John with Him into the Garden, and asked them to watch with Him for an hour? Was there ever any sorrow like His sorrow? He was surely casting all of His care upon the Father. But at that moment there was no reply from heaven. As He approached “now” that “the hour” had arrived, was He contemplating what it was really going to mean to Him to do the Father’s will, to be “stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted”?

I am not saying that I am right in how I am interpreting this verse, but it seems to me that the thoughts that I have expressed to you may very well have been the way in which the Lord was struggling with the will of God at this moment in His earthly sojourn. Why would He pray such a prayer if it were not of deep, very deep, and possibly agonizing concern to Him? Death has never been, and never will be, for any of us what it was to Him. We all need to go back to read Psalm 52:13 to 53:12 to seek to grasp from the Word itself something of the

depth of our Lord's sufferings as He faced the Cross. There was nothing, absolutely nothing, that had delighted the heart of our Lord through all eternity past, and up to that time in the present, than our Lord's relationship with His Father, and His Father's relationship with Him. Remember how our Lord is described in the book of Hebrews in connection with His priestly ministry

7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

10 Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec (Heb. 5:7-10).

And so we come to the end of the part of our Lord's High Priestly prayer in which He prayed for Himself. It is really a heart-searching part of His prayer and one which deserves our prayerful meditation in order to be able to appreciate more fully what our Lord experienced as He anticipated what the death on the Cross was going to mean to Him.

The next section of this prayer tells us how our Lord prayed for His apostles.

April 14, 2008

II. OUR LORD PRAYS FOR HIS APOSTLES (John 17:6-19).

17:6 Lenski pointed out that in verses 6 through 10 "we have the motivation for the prayer for the apostles, and in verses 11-19 His "intercessory petitions" for them, "coupled with necessary details" (p. 1128).

In our Lord's prayer He never once used the word *disciple*, or *disciples*, nor did He use the word *apostle*, or *apostles*. And yet I don't know of any who has written on John 17 who doubts that the Lord was speaking of the twelve disciples who became apostles. His expression for them was, "the men which Thou gavest Me." We see this expression seven times throughout the Lord's prayer. It is used twice here in verse 6, but we had it before in verse 2, and then see it also in verses 9, 11, 12, 24. The use in verse 2 applies to all believers, as does the reference in verse 24, but the rest seem to apply to the twelve apostles. We all are God the Father's gift to His Son, but the apostles were given to Him for a special ministry with the Lord in the days of His ministry on earth, and for the days immediately following,

For the most part they were not outstanding, trained men, prepared for the work that they were called to do, but we know that the first four made their living as fishermen, and that their fathers before them had been fishermen. Their names are mentioned in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Matthew gives us this record of who they were:

1 And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

3 Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;

4 Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him (Matt. 10:1-4).

These men have become very important to us, but actually, from a human standpoint, they were a list of nobodies! Why would a sovereign God, Who could have chosen anybody that He wanted to choose, choose these twelve men? The Bible gives us the answer to that question: "That no flesh should glory in His

presence” (1 Cor. 1:29), and also, “That . . . he that glorieth, let Him glory in the Lord” (1 Cor. 1:31).

The Apostle Paul, who was appointed after the Lord went back to heaven, probably had the most to be proud of because of his training and his achievements among the Jews, but he described himself as “the least of all saints” (Eph. 3:8), and later that he was the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). I repeat what I said last Sunday morning, that the longer we know the Lord, the more we realize what great sinners we have been. Remember what Paul wrote to the Corinthians about our calling in 1 Corinthians 1:26-29:

26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called:

27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;

28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:

29 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

God chose us for His glory. He saved us for His glory. He keeps us for His glory. He works through us for His glory. And when we finally get to heaven, it will all be for His glory. Let us never forget this. He could get along without any of us, but it is for His glory that we are what we are, and that we are not what we might have been if He had left us in our sin. “To God be the glory; great things He has done.” And yet in spite of our lowly position, we are exhorted all through Scripture to humble ourselves before the Lord.

Now notice the beginning of this part of the prayer where the Lord prayed for His apostles: “I have manifested Thy Name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world.” The relationship that each of these men (except for Judas) was initiated by God. God chose them in eternity past. He called them in time. And He saved them by manifesting the Name of Jesus to each one of them individually. “Manifested” is a word speaking of a revelation that was given to each of them. God reveals to us what we do not have the capacity to learn in any other way. He did it at different times and in different ways to these men who had been given to Christ. When the Lord asked His disciples who people thought He was, He was given different answers: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets. I would have been honored if anyone ever thought that of me. But those were people to whom God had not “manifested” Who Jesus was. But Peter gave this answer when our Lord asked them Who they thought He was. “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16). The Lord blessed Peter for what He said, but then the Lord added this: “Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.” That is how Peter learned who Jesus was. He didn’t learn it by himself. He didn’t learn it from his parents. He didn’t learn it in the synagogue. God the Father manifested to Peter Who Jesus was. The Father didn’t speak in an audible voice to Peter, but one day in his heart, God caused Peter to realize that Jesus was more than a human being; He knew that Jesus was the eternal Son of the living God. I can’t tell you when it was that I first realized Who Jesus was, and is, but once you understand this basic and all-important truth, you can never believe anything else about Him.

Well, as the Lord prayed for His apostles here in John 17, He had been the instrument through Whom the apostles had come to the realization of Who God was. He was the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus was “the Son of the living God.” The person who doesn’t understand the relationship between God and Jesus doesn’t really understand Who Jesus is, or Who God is. God has revealed Himself in His Son. The Muslims call Jesus a prophet which is an indication that they don’t really know Who Jesus is, but also evidence that they don’t really know God. And they show that by worshiping a non-existent god, who they call Allah. That protestant minister who objected so strenuously to my speaking of Jesus as the Lord Jesus Christ, did so because He didn’t know Who Jesus is, neither did he know God (although he would have denied that). Nobody could really *manifest God’s Name* to any of us except the Lord Jesus Christ. Remember that the Apostle John said in John 1:14, “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.” The person who has come to an understanding of Who Jesus is, has come also to understand Who God is.

What else did the Lord say here in verse 6?

This manifestation of God had been given to those men whom the Father had given Him out of the world. The apostles were God’s gift to the Lord Jesus Christ. God gave Jesus to them, and He gave them to Jesus. What a precious gifts these are! I believe we can say that God could have given our Lord nothing that would be more pleasing to Him, than to give the apostles to Him. And what is true of the apostles, is also true of us. God in eternity past chose us for salvation, and He gave us to His Son that we might be saved **and belong to the Lord for ever!** And to give us to Christ, He has taken us out of the world. We are still in the world, but we are not of the world. We no longer belong to the world. The Father has delivered us from the world. We are here as strangers and pilgrims. It was by our Lord’s death on Calvary’s Cross that the Father delivered us from our sins, from the Devil, and from the world, and He has given us to Christ. Jesus said, “All that the Father giveth me shall come unto Me, and him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). We are eternally secure in Christ. We all need to remember our Lord’s words in John 10:27-31:

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

30 I and my Father are one.

The Lord seemed to delight in this relationship that He had with those whom the Father had given to Him, and that the Lord had chosen them specifically to give them to the Son. But how were those whom the Father had given to Christ, to be identified? “And they have kept Thy Word.” Not only have they been delivered from the world, but “they have kept Thy Word.” What did the Lord mean by the word “kept”? On the human side those who have been given by the Father to His Son, are those not only guard and protect the Word, but are careful to observe the teaching of the Word. *It is impossible to separate God from Christ, or to separate Christ from the people of God, or to separate the people of God from the Word of God.*

The manifestation of God continued in the heart and life of the apostles, as it does in us. Marcus Rainsford had this to say about keeping the Word:

It is in our keeping the Word of God that the Holy Spirit manifests to us the God of the Word. The world doth not keep the Word of God, therefore Gos is not manifested to them. In the same degree as His people keep the Word, is the God of the Word manifested in their souls (p. 121).

17:7 It is important to note that in our Lord’s prayer to the Father, it would be easy to think that the apostles had reached a state of perfection, and that at this point they all were entirely what God intended that they should be. We could assume this from what Marcus Rainsford pointed out in his comments on this seventh verse of our Lord’s prayer:

In this part of His prayer, our blessed Lord is wholly engaged in commending His people to His Father. No allusion of the slightest kind is made to any of their many deficiencies, no reference to any of their frequent failures; we search in vain throughout the whole prayer for anything like an accusation against them, directly or indirectly . . . How little they actually knew at this time! How imperfectly they had kept that Word! How deficient had been their faith! This fact is evident from our Lord’s own frequent rebuking of them; only a short time before, we find Him saying to them, “Do ye now believe?” And how often do we find such rebukes as these – “O ye of little faith!” “How is it that ye do not believe?”

Let us evermore remember this most precious fact, that however in His wondrous grace our blessed Teacher may discover to ourselves our deficiencies; however he may correct and rebuke us, discovering to us in our daily experience how needy, how feeble we are, and of how little faith – yet in our standing before God is in the fulness of our Head and Representative; and He will never allow us to appear before His Father otherwise than as endued with all the completeness of His own righteousness. When we know, even as we are known, though our experience shall be more blessed, yet shall not our standing or acceptance be more complete than it is now will He plead for us and of us – “Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of Thee (Rains- ford, pp. 128, 129).

What are some of the things that the Father had given to the Son of God in the flesh? Let us start right here in John 17:

- 1) First and foremost, His body had been prepared for Him by the Father. Cf. Psa. 40:6-8; quoted in Heb. 10:5-7. Also Isa. 7:14.
- 2) Three gifts in verse 2: Authority over all flesh to give eternal life to those whom the father had given Him.
- 3) The Father gave Him a work to do. He was sent to complete the revelation of God, and to accomplish the work of salvation. “The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world” (1 John 4:14).
- 4) The message He gave was given to Him by God. Cf. John 17:8; 15:15; 7:16
- 5) The Father gave Him the power to do the miracles which He performed. Cf. John 14:10.

Lenski, speaking of the wording of this verse, said that the “all” in this verse is emphatic so that it referred not just to the teaching and the miracles of the Lord but that it included “everything in and about Jesus.” The eleven believed in Jesus from the start, but the longer they were in contact with Him, the more they arrived at the realization that everything about Him was from the Father.

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17:8 This verse, beginning with the word “for,” explains how the apostles had come to the realization that the Lord had just mentioned in verse 7. In verse 7 the Lord expressed the tremendous progress that the apostles had come to in their understanding of the word, and it was by the continuous teaching of the Lord, of the words that had been given to Him by the Father, that they had arrived at such knowledge of the Lord.

Some verses in support of what the Lord was saying here are John 3:34-35:

34 For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.

35 The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.

See John 6:66-69:

66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.

69 And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

Also John 12:48-50:

48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.

49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.

50 And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

Again we should notice John 14:10-11

10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.

11 Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake.

Bishop Ryle made an observation here that is worth noticing. “Our Lord here declares three remarkable things about His disciples.” And, of course, all three are the result of the way the Lord was using His Word, or “words” in their hearts:

- 1) They had willingly received and embraced the truths He brought them from the Father.
- 2) They had known and acknowledged that their Master came from God the Father.
- 3) They believed and were persuaded that the Father sent Him to be the Messiah (II, 424).

None of this is to the glory of the disciples. It is a statement of how the Lord had used His words to convince them of the character and ministry of the Lord, and how all of this demonstrated the power of the Word of God. Countless others heard the same words, but the Lord did not use the same words to convince them as to Who the Lord was, and why He had come. This verse is evidence of the truth of Isaiah 55:11:

11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

It is also evidence that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17). We do not determine how the Lord is going to use His Word. Our responsibility is to give the Word; how the Lord uses it is entirely up to Him. We know that the faith of the apostles at this point, was anything but strong or complete, but the Lord knew the power of the Word and so was anticipating how the impact of the Word would grow and become stronger as the Spirit of God continued to use it in their lives.

We can often become discouraged about ourselves when we see the weakness of our faith, and how slowly we really understand the truth. We can be discouraged about others for the same reason. But the fact that we understand anything, is evidence that we are going to understand more. So we need to keep reading the Word, and we need to continue hearing the Word taught by others. That is the way we are going to grow in our knowledge of Christ and in our understanding of His Word. To do anything else is a colossal waste of time.

Verse 8 expresses progression in the understanding the Lord was giving His disciples. Where they were in their understanding at that moment, still showed immaturity, but the Lord knew that the apostles (except for Judas) were on the way to a greater understanding of His words.

17:9 Our Lord’s words here do not mean that He never prayed for the world. On the Cross He prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Paul declared his willingness to lose his own salvation if God would save his brethren, his “kinsman according to the flesh.” But the great emphasis for prayer in the Bible is upon prayer for the people of God. And so our Lord, in saying, “I pray for them: I pray not for the world,” was expressing where our primary emphasis in prayer should be. And as we learn from the Apostles’ prayers which are recorded in the Bible, not only is prayer emphasized for believers, but special emphasis needs to be made when we see evidence where God is working, and where believers are making progress in their understanding of the truth.

Let me give you an illustration from the writing of the Apostle Paul, that he understood what the Lord was saying to the Father here in His high priestly prayer. Please turn in your Bibles to Colossians 1. Note what the Apostle Paul said about the spiritual condition of the Colossian believers in verses 3 through 8. (Read and explain.) It would have been natural for Paul to feel that instead of praying for a church like that, he ought to spend his time praying for other churches where things were not going so well. But notice his words with which

verse 9 begins: “For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you . . .” It was because they were making such progress, and things were going so well, that he was encouraged to continue, and, if anything, to increase his praying for them. There are two reasons for this:

- 1) Where God is so obviously working, we need to pray that He will continue to work, and that those growing believers will continue to grow. Things are never so good that they cannot be better.
- 2) We know that growing Christians are a special target for the Devil. Where the Lord is working, the Devil will be working also. The Devil can’t take our salvation away, but he will be doing what he can to trip us up in our walk with the Lord. A growing Christian is the greatest threat among Christians to what the Devil is seeking to do in this world.

The “I” in what the Lord said, is emphatic. And not only did the Lord pray for His disciples on that occasion, but He continued to pray for them after He went back to heaven. And that is what He is still doing for us, and for all who believe in Him today. Hebrew 9:24 tells us that He has gone “into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” Hebrews 7:25 tells us,

25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Also we need to remember 1 John 2:1 which tells us,

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

It is always a blessing for us when someone tells us that they pray for us. No higher honor can be placed upon us by our fellow-believers. And yet without minimizing the importance of knowing that others pray for us, how can we ever fully comprehend the importance of these verses which affirm and reaffirm that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of the eternal God lives forever to pray for each one of us. And He does that for each of us individually as though there was nothing else that He has to do, and no one else that He prays for.

Ryle said that “the special intercession of the Lord Jesus is one grand secret of the believer’s safety” (p. 427), He wouldn’t be doing it if it were not absolutely essential for our salvation. The reason Judas turned away from our Lord, but never came back, while Peter grievously and repeatedly denied that He even knew the Lord, is to be found in our Lord’s words to Peter, “But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not” (Luke 22:32). None of us knows how often we have been kept from complete disaster by the faithful intercession of our Lord Jesus with the Father on our behalf.

In the last statement of verse 9 our Lord uses the word “for” again to explain why He was praying for the apostles: “for they are Thine.” Lenski has a very interesting statement about these words, “for they are Thine”:

In words of utmost simplicity yet profound beyond human thought Jesus dwells on the relation of the disciples to Himself. The Father has given them to Him, but this is not a dismissal of the disciples from the Father; the very reason why Jesus prays for them is “because they are thine.” As a gift to Jesus they are the Father’s; as the Father’s they are a gift to Jesus. Strange interaction and interrelation – no one comes to the Father except through Jesus, so that we may say Jesus gives us to Him, and yet Jesus considers us as given to Himself, and even, when so given, as still being the Father’s (p. 1133).

How blessed we are, and how secure we are since we belong to the Father, and yet at the same time we belong to our Lord Jesus Christ! And the Lord confirms this in verse 10.

7:10 We have already discussed the amazing truth that is in those words, “And all mine are thine, and thine are mine.” We are not our own, but we belong jointly to the Father and the Son. The Father gave the apostles to the Son without giving them away, and the Son has given us back to the Father without giving us away. And it is because we belong to both the Father and the Son that our Lord could say about the apostles

(and about us), “and I am glorified in them.” Note that the Lord said here that He was glorified “in them,” not just *by* them.

This statement should remind us of the Apostle Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 6:19 and 20:

19 What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

To glorify God “in your body, and in your spirit means *outwardly* and *inwardly*. A true child of God is living evidence that God is God, and that Jesus Christ is His Son because he would not be what he is, even with all of his imperfections, if God were not God, and Jesus Christ were not His Son. So all that we are, and all that we do, are not to be for our glory, but for God’s glory and the glory of His Son. For Jesus to be glorified “in” us, means that there is no way to explain the change in a Christian’s life except by the absolute truth that God is God and that Jesus Christ is His Son. ***We are what we are because They are what They are!*** Twice in Ephesians 1, once in verse 12, and again in verse 14, Paul said that God has saved us even ultimately that forever we should be “to the praise of His glory.” His glory which is revealed in us is all for His glory, not for ourselves.

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17:11 Notice that this is a most important point in time in the history, not only of Christ, but also of His disciples. In verse 1 our Lord had said, “The hour is come.” He could have used the word there as He did here. This was the hour that our Lord would die, but it was also the “now” when He would return to the Father. He speaks as though His suffering and death, and His resurrection, were all completed. His work was finished, as He said in verse 4, not actually, but so certain was it that He would do all that was immediately before Him that He could speak of it as already accomplished. His time in the world had been marked by opposition and rejection. It had been a time in which He had had constantly to take time away from everything and everyone to have His soul refreshed in fellowship with the Father. This was the world He had created for His own glory, but up to that point His glory had not been realized.

But now that He was preparing to leave His disciples, He realized perhaps in a new way in which He as a Man was gaining in wisdom, how precious those twelve men had become to Him. I say twelve, including Judas Iscariot, because you will remember that when the Jews came to arrest the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane, with Judas leading them, that Judas approached the Lord, and kissed Him. But the Lord said to him, to Judas, “Friend, wherefore art thou come?” (Matt. 26:50). You will remember that we read in the beginning of our study of the five chapters in John that we are covering, that John told us “His hour was come that He should depart of this world, unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end” (John 13:1).

He had been with them throughout all of His public ministry. Their relationship had become stronger and tighter. It was a painful parting for Him, and it would a painful parting for them. We don’t know when each of them was actually saved, but we know that the past three years had been years of the closest fellowship with Him. For the first time they were to go on without Him physically present with them. He would promise that He would be with them always, but soon it would be in His invisible present, but not where they could actually see Him and hear Him. Everything would be different for them from this point on for the rest of their lives.

Now was the Lord leaving them in a good place; He was leaving them “in the world.” It was a world concerning which the Lord had said to them in John 15:18-19:

18 If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

It was not a friendly world. It was a hostile world. It was a sinful, fallen world. And so it was a very dangerous world, dangerous not only for the bodies, that is, for their lives, but also for their souls. It was a world ruled over by the Devil, where the direction was always downward, not upward. It was a world which would put them constantly under pressure to conform to it. It was a world to which they were to go with a message which the world did not want to hear, and which they could not understand when they did hear it. It was a world in which the Holy Spirit would come to them, to abide with them forever, and about which the Apostle John would write for the blessing and encouragement of all the people of God, "greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

But the question might be asked, and probably you have asked it, Why does the Lord leave us in this world? The moment we are saved we are as fitted for heaven as we ever will be. Our salvation is complete. We will never be more saved than we are the moment we are saved. The thief on the cross is an illustration of that. He simply said to the Lord, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." What was the Lord's answer? "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise." You and I don't get salvation by installments. The moment we are saved we are totally saved. However, there are at least two major reasons that the Lord leaves us here after we are saved:

1) He leaves us here in this world that we might grow in our knowledge of Him, and in our likeness to Him. It is in the trials and testings of this life, that we are gradually becoming, under the blessing of God, less and less like we were when we were first saved, and more and more like the Lord Jesus which is the main reason that our "Holy Father" has saved us.

The second reason is related to the first:

2) The second reason we are saved is that we might be instruments in the hand of God for the salvation of others who the Lord has appointed for salvation. And we need to remember that the Lord told His people just before He ascended to heaven, "And ye shall **be** witnesses unto Me." He did not say that ye shall give a witness. The main witness we have is our lives, as in practice we become like our heavenly Father, and like our Savior.

We are left here to learn about God through the Word. We are left here that our faith might be increased as we face the trials and testings and opposition that come to us living in this world. In these we learn about ourselves, and how much we need the Lord. The Lord could have spread the Gospel throughout the world by angels. They could do it faster than we can. But the Lord works through people, His people, growing people, holy people.

But it is right here that we see why this prayer is called our Lord's high priestly prayer. We have in this verse His first request for them, not the first our Lord had ever prayed for them, but His first request as He thought of leaving them. Lenski pointed out that the word for "come" which the Lord used here, *ἔρχομαι*, means *to come with a request*, and that this is the only time the Lord used this word with this meaning in all of the Gospels.

When the Lord began His prayer, He addressed God as "Father." And remember that this is the way that God loves for us to address Him. But here He said, "Holy Father." Why do you think He addressed the Lord this way? By the way, you have heard these two words many times in recent days as the Pope has been in America and everyone is talking about the "Holy Father." The Pope is not the "Holy Father," and it is taking God's name in vain to use it for the Pope. No mere man, and that is what the Pope is, should ever allow himself to be called the "Holy Father." This is the equivalent of calling him God, which he is not!

But why did the Lord Jesus call God, “Holy Father”? This is the only time on record in the Gospels when our Lord addressed the Father as, “Holy Father.” And that should emphasize the fact that there must have been a reason that the Lord did it here. Bishop Ryle said that it might be because the Lord wanted the Father to keep the apostles free from the dominion of evil. Lenski says practically the same thing. It may be, and probably is, indicated by our Lord’s request that the Father “keep” the apostles because it means *to guard, to protect* from harm or injury. It is like a soldier on guard who is to keep his eye on that which he is guarding. It has military implications. We are in spiritual warfare, and there are plenty of possibilities for us to be injured. The Father is our Commander-in-chief. The world of people is our enemy. The flesh is attracted by the world. The Devil is “the god of this world.”

But the Lord Jesus addressed the Father as “Holy Father” because holiness is His crowning attribute. It is that out of which all of His other attributes come. In fact, His name is Holy. Cf. Isaiah 57:15:

15 For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Mary, the mother of our Lord, said this in what is called her Magnificat: “For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name” (Luke 1:49).

For the Holy Father to keep the apostles “through thine own Name,” means that the Lord Jesus wanted the Father to keep the apostles with all that is signified by His Name. “The ‘name’ of God . . . is frequently used in Scripture to signify His character and attributes” (Ryle, II, 434) – all of them! The Lord Jesus was praying that the “Holy Father” would exercise all of His divine powers and attributes in the defense of the apostles – His power, His wisdom, His grace, His omnipresence, His faithfulness, His love, and on and on! The nations like to display their power. Individuals like to show their power. But all of the power in the whole universe combined is no match for a holy, sovereign God. God is absolutely holy in all that He does. And He could take care of Peter and James and John, and all of the other apostles individually like He had nothing else to do. The apostles needed this kind of care, and we do too because our “adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seek-ing whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

Only when we get to heaven will we learn how many times the Father has kept us from getting into sin when that may even have been our intention, or we were blinded to the fact that that is where we were headed. “He careth for you” speaks of what God is doing for all of His people, all of the time. As we say today, 24-7.

But what is the object of the care the Holy Father exercises in each one of our lives? It is “that they may be one, as we are.” Not only are we witnesses to a lost and sinful world by what the Gospel has done in our lives individually, but it is to be seen in the uniqueness of our relationship in the Lord to each other. There is nothing on earth like the fellowship that true Christians have with each other. Although the Lord did not use the word *fellowship* in the verses I am going to give to you, they describe what true Christian fellowship is. The verses are found in John 13:34-35

34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

The first commandment is that we are to love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind. The second commandment was that we are to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. This “new commandment,” as the Lord called it, is a huge step beyond the second commandment. We as Christians are to “love one another” as Christ has love us. And this is more effective than anything else in convincing people in the world that we truly belong to the Lord. The relationship between the Father and the Son is the greatest example that there is, or ever could be, of unity. We can never reach that level, but that should be our goal. There is power in unity, great power. On the other hand, when there is disunity and broken fellowship because of quarrels and

divisions, the testimony of believers is broken up, weakened, and paralyzed, as one writer has expressed it. The church today has not paid as much attention to this as she should. Our oneness is centered in Christ, in the truth of the Word of God, and in the goal of holy living for all of the people of God. There is a false unity that sets aside the basic truths of Scripture, but that is the Devil's lie.

Before the Lord called Lazarus out of the tomb, this was the prayer that He prayed:

41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.

42 And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me (John 11:41-42).

Why do I quote this verse now? Because of those words of our Lord, "And I knew that thou hearest me always." And then add these verses from 1 John 5:14-15:

14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

15 And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

The Apostle John said that "if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him. *So since the Lord Jesus said that the Father always hears Him*, and John said that if God hears us, then we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him. So this means that the Lord Jesus never prayed a prayer that was not, or is not, or will be, answered!

And so we should not be surprised to read these words in 1 Peter 1:3-5 where Peter was probably remembering what the Lord said in John 17:11

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

The word "reserved" in verse 4 can be translated *kept* (**τηρέω**) because it is the same verb that the Lord used when He prayed to the Father in John 17:11 saying, "Holy Father, keep through thine own Name those whom Thou hast given Me . . ." The word "kept" in verse 5 is a different word, but it is almost identical in meaning. It is the verb **φρουρέω**, which means to set up a guard, a military force to guard someone or something.

As I read those words, "who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," I thought of those word in Psalm 91:11, "For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." I know this a OT passage, but who knows but that God even sends angels to keep us, along with everything else He does to keep us securely for Himself.

But when we think of the keeping power of God, who could overlook Jude 24-25:

24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

25 To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

If you need another passage, remember John 10:27-30:

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

30 I and my Father are one.

Isn't all of this a proof of Hebrews 7:25 concerning the intercessory ministry of our Lord?

25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

April 28, 2008

But what did the Lord mean when He said to the Father, "Keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou hast given me"? In Scripture a name speaks of the character of the one who carries that name. The greatest example of this is, "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." Jesus means *Jehovah is salvation*. So that salvation is dependent upon all that Jesus is, primarily, and then upon all that Jesus has done to secure our salvation. So our Lord did not call His disciples, and then keep them because of what they were in themselves, nor because of any meritorious thing that they had done. It was all because of Who Jesus was (and is) and what He would do in finishing the work that the Father had given Him to do. But here our Lord was speaking of the Father's Name, "Holy Father." It is because the Holy Father is a God of grace, love, mercy, compassion, longsuffering, righteous, and so on, that you and I and every other redeemed person is saved, and will always be saved. Does this mean that we will never sin? Of course not. But it means that if we do sin, "we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The Father sent the Son to die for the sins of all believers, past, present and future, and for their sins past, present, and future. It is these whom the Lord Jesus prayed would be "one." What does this mean? Obviously this was very much upon the heart of our Lord as He prayed for His apostles, and also as it would relate to all of the people of God in all of the years ahead.

Lenski, the commentator I mention so often because of the excellent job that he does in explaining the original text, indicates from the expression, "that they may be one, as we are," that the Lord was not praying that the apostles would become one, any more than our Lord and the Father were yet to become one. He was praying that they would recognize that they already were one, and that their relationship with each other would be an expression of that oneness. Lenski saw in this a possible expression relating to one body, and their oneness in Christ. All believers are spiritually one because of their relationship to the Lord. The Lord was praying that they would keep this oneness in mind, and that it would be demonstrated by their fellowship with the Lord Jesus, and by their solid and permanent to the same Father. They were one in their dependence upon the Father and the Son, and one in their dependence upon the Word of God for everything that had to do with their faith and practice. So it was not that they were to become one, but that they were to recognize that they already are one, and so would constantly be doing all that they could to recognize and even strengthen their oneness with each other by their knowledge of and devotion to the Father and the Son, and by their complete recognition of the Bible as the Word of God.

So the oneness that the Lord was praying about was not a oneness that they were to seek, but a oneness that they were to recognize and maintain throughout their lives and in their work as apostles. Our oneness has to do with our relationship to God, to Christ, to the Word of God, and to each other as eternally united in salvation to Christ and to God.

7:12 One of the greatest desires that is the heart of a true pastor, is that he would through the influence of his life and ministry, be able to keep them from straying away from the Lord. Every parent who truly knows the Lord prays that he, or she, whether father or mother, prays that their children will always walk with the Lord. The Apostle John said in his Third Epistle, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth." As we get older, we are increasingly thankful for those who have strengthened us in our walk

with the Lord. But this is not all that the Lord had in mind when he said to the Father here in verse 12 of his prayer, “While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Thy Name.” He was not just speaking of keeping them in fellowship with Himself and with the Father, *but of keeping them in salvation. Only God can do that!* Jude finished his epistle by referring to God “Who is able to keep you from falling.” Let me remind you again of what our Lord, back in John 10:27-30, said:

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

29 My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

30 I and my Father are one.

Just as we have learned that the Father did not give the apostles to the Son except He would also keep them for Himself, so the Lord Jesus would pray that the Father would keep those whom He had been keeping while He was on the earth. He did not mean that He would not be keeping them any longer, but that the Apostles would from that moment on be kept by the Father also. When we are saved, we are saved eternally, *but only because we are being kept by the Son and by the Father.* None of us is sufficient to save ourselves, but the Lord Jesus and the Father are able “to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”

We have a triple security: in the Father, in the Lord Jesus, and in the Holy Spirit. Their record was perfect – 100 %! “None of them is lost.” And it continues to be perfect. There have always been those who have professed faith in Christ, and have fallen away, some never to come back. But no person who has truly been regenerated by the power of Christ and of the Gospel, has ever been lost.

To prove this our Lord cited the one whom people who are prone to mention who appears to be the one who was the exception to the rule: “the son of perdition.” We all know, or should know that this was Judas Iscariot. He was not saved, and then lost, but he had never been saved. Remember what we read about the Lord said about Judas back in the first chapter of the Upper Room Discourse, in John 13:17-19:

17 If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

18 I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.

19 Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He.

The only other time that this expression, “the son of perdition,” appears in the Bible is in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4. In those verses the Apostle Paul predicted the coming of the Antichrist. Let me read those verses beginning with the beginning of the chapter:

1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him,

2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ [“of the Lord,” has more textual support] is at hand.

3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

Marcus Rainsford wrote:

There is something unutterable mysterious about the person and character of Judas Iscariot [i.e., that he should be called “the son of perdition” like the Antichrist will be] . . . The Lord also declare[d] (John 6:70) that he was a “devil”. . . Some reading this verse have been puzzled as if it implied that Judas had been given to Christ to be saved, and that Christ lost him. . . Judas Iscariot never fell from grace,

for he never had it. He was “a thief,” he was “a devil” (pp. 210, 211).

The Lord chose Judas knowing what he was and what he would do, but Judas was not one of those given by the Father to Him. Why did the Lord chose Judas to be an apostle when He knew that Judas was not saved, and would never be saved?

The first answer to that question has to be, “that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” In the plan and purpose of God for our salvation, the whole way was ordained by God, and predicted by Scripture, even to the fact that our Lord would be betrayed by one who was very close to Him. Ahithophel was a type of Judas. Perhaps you remember how Absalom led a rebellion against his father, King David. Ahithophel was David’s friend and trusted advisor. But he joined with Absalom, and ultimately killed himself when Absalom rejected his advice and took the advice of Hushai. See Psalm 41:9-11:

9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

10 But thou, O Lord, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them.

11 By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.

See also Psalm 55:12-16:

12 For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him:

13 But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.

14 We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.

15 Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness is in their dwellings, and among them.

16 As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me.

Some cite Psalm 109:6-10 as a reference to Ahithophel:

6 Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand.

7 When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin.

8 Let his days be few; and let another take his office.

9 Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow.

It seems that Peter in Acts 1:20, by quoting from Psalm 109:8 confirmed that it was a reference to what Judas Iscariot actually did to the Lord.

A second answer as to why the Lord chose Judas was to confirm that some are appointed for eternal judgment, as the Apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 2:7-8:

7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

This is a difficult truth for all of us to receive, but we have to admit that it is the teaching of Scripture. The Apostle Paul showed his agreement with the Apostle Peter by what he wrote in Romans 9:6-25. **(Read.)**

A third answer to the question, Why did our Lord choose Judas knowing that he was not saved, and would not be saved? It was to serve as a warning to generation after generation that not even the closest relationship to Jesus Christ would be sufficient for salvation apart from the convicting and regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Think of the opportunities that Judas had to hear the Lord Jesus Christ teach the Word. Think of how many miracles of our Lord He witnessed, and how many miracles he himself was enabled to perform. When the Lord gave His disciples power to heal diseases, to cast out demons, and to preach the Gospel, there is nothing in the Bible to indicate that Judas Iscariot did not receive that power. But to contrast Peter and Judas,

both disowned the Lord. But when Peter was convicted of his sin, he wept bitter tears of repentance. After Judas realized the great evil he had done in betraying the Lord, he got rid of the money that he had been paid to do the evil that he had done, and then he went out and hung himself.

And so we have this clear example before us. If being an apostle would not save Judas, the we know that church membership will not save. Serving in a church as a pastor will not save. Baptism will not save. No amount of works will save. Good character will not save. We can't buy salvation by giving to the church or to charities. Nothing any person can do can nullify the fact that he, or she, is a sinner, and the wages of sin is death. Salvation comes through the convicting work of the Spirit, and faith in Christ crucified, risen, and glorified.

Judas could well be numbered among those in the coming judgment day who will say what the Lord said that "many will say," according to Matthew 7:21-23,

21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

How many thousands of times do you think that Judas Iscariot called the Lord, "Lord"?

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

I don't think that anyone would come regularly to a Tuesday morning Bible Class who doesn't know the Savior. But such a thing might be possible. Let me urge all of us to make sure that we are saved, and that we know in our hearts that the only way we are going to have our sins forgiven, and be assured that we will have a place in heaven, is because Christ is our Savior.

Our Lord here was really preaching the Gospel to the apostles were themselves preachers of the Gospel. And He was praying to back up His preaching, knowing that salvation is a work of God alone.

April 29, 2008

But let us go on to verse 13.

7:13 Here the Lord repeated what He had already said in verse 11, "And now come I to Thee." He had kept His disciples all the time that He had been with them. Now He was praying that the Father would keep them, guard them, protect them. It was not that He would not continue to keep them, but that they would have the same protection that they had had from the visible presence of the Lord, that they would continue to have from the unseen presence of the Father. Therefore the joy that they had had, they would continue to have. Our Lord's departure from them would make no difference at all in the gracious and sovereign way the had been protected up to the present.

There is some question about the words, "and these things I speak in the world," as to whether or not the Lord was speaking about the words of His prayer, or the words that He had spoken to them in chapters 13 through 16. I don't see any reason for saying that it had to be one or the other; could it not have been *all* that the Lord had said to them in chapters 13 through 16 as well as in His prayer.

I can't help but link these words of our Lord with Luke's description of the apostles and other believers who saw the Lord ascend back to the Father. We read these words in the last four verses of Luke's Gospel:

50 And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:

53 And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen (Luke 24:50-53).

So their hearts will full of joy when we might think that their hearts would have been filled with sorrow because of the Lord's departure. Instead there His joy, the Lord's joy, was fulfilled in them. Undoubtedly their joy at His departure was in part due to the fact that He had promised that He was going to come again to take them to be in heaven where He was, and so would they ever be with the Lord! Such should be our joy as well.

17:14 Again the Lord repeats what He had said to the Father in prayer. See verse 8. See also our Lord's emphasis on "the word" in verse 6. Let us be reminded that the Word is God's gift to those of us who are His people. And we have every reason to thank God and to thank Christ that that Word has been preserved for us. We have the very words that the Father gave to His Son to give to the apostles. This is another of the many things that God keeps. Many attacks have been made against the Word of God, and the attacks are still going on in the world, and in our nation today. And it often looks like the enemies of God and His Word are being successful. But the enemies of God's people and of God's Word never have been completely successful, and they never will be!

The Word had had a transforming effect upon the apostles, making them completely different from the world. They were no longer a part of the world even though they were still in the world. This is one verse of many which shows the great importance of the meaning of prepositions when the Bible speaks of us who are the people of God. We are never going to feel that we belong in this world because, like the Lord, we are no longer a part of the world. And how thankful we should be that we recognize in our hearts that this is true. And it is the Word where we learn how different we are to be, and actually how different we are! There are various degrees that we can expect from the world, but that which characterizes all forms of hatred is *rejection!* *There is nothing about God, or Christ, or the Holy Spirit, or the church, or of the Word, that is acceptable to God. How amazing it is, then, that we should find such a determined attempt by many in the professing church to take on the ways of the world. Our mission is not to change the world, but to see people delivered from the world, its ways, and its destiny. We see today a growing battle between the people of God and the people of the world. The world wants us to conform (Rom. 12:1-2), but the will of God is that we do His will for His glory. The church, walking in the fear of God, is a mighty instrument in the hand of God for blessing in the world. But a compromising church is a shame and a disgrace.*

May 5, 2008

17:15 We see that "the world" was very much on the mind of the Lord as He prayed for the apostles. They were special targets of the Devil as the Lord anticipated His return to heaven. The Devil is no match for the Lord, but he knows that we are weak and easily deceived unless we are walking in the power of the Spirit and in close fellowship with the Lord. All of us who are saved were born in this world and originally were a part of this world until we were saved. Those who still need to be reached are still a part of this world, under the judgment of God, but they are totally ignorant of what the real issue in life is. This world, although it is under the tyranny of Satan, is still the Lord's world, and God is perfectly sufficient to care for His own and to work out His purposes in the world. So we are left here protected by the keeping power, the sovereign keeping of God. He alone is sufficient to "keep" us "from," not just "the evil," but *from the Evil One*, the Devil. And this is how "the evil" is translated in all of the most recent and reliable translations. Even the unreliable Living Bible recognizes that the Lord was praying about "Satan's power."

But there are those, like Bishop Ryle, for whom I have a great deal of respect, who take this request as referring to the evil that is in the world. And we must not overlook the fact that the Lord does that too. Only eternity

will reveal how many times God has spared us from sin, or sickness, or even death, which we may not have been conscious of, but which we will learn about when we get to heaven.

As we experience the testings and trials of our lives, we need to remember how the Lord prayed for the apostles which is evidence of how He prays for us. Every request the Lord prayed for His own, was another way of saying how much He loved them. And as we think of His requests as we apply them to ourselves, we should take them as though the Lord was saying to each of us, "I love you." We can never in this life fully appreciate how much the Lord loves us. Paul tells us in Romans 5 that the depth of His love for us is evident in the fact that He died for us. He knows how weak we are, how quickly we are turned out of the way, how blind we are to the true nature of sin, and how quickly we forget the nature of the enemies that we face, and how unrelenting the Devil and the demons are to drag us down into sin and shame. Sometimes we fall, but the Lord's request for us against the Devil, stands. We might think that the Lord's statement to the Father at the beginning of this verse brings His love for us into question. If He really loved the apostles, why didn't He take them with Him? It was because there were still those in the world and a part of the world whom He loved just like He loved those He had already saved. *The keeping power of God is greater than the destroying power of Satan.* Let us never forget that. At this very moment all of us, you and I, are trophies of the keeping power of God. We are here today not only because the Lord has saved us, and we want to be here, but we are here because every moment since we have been saved, He has been keeping us. We may have been wounded many times, and have scars to show for our failures, but we are here today, kept by the Lord, and we will be kept to the very end of our life here on earth. And all of the time He is keeping us, He is teaching us, strengthening us, showing us that we are not what we are inclined to think of ourselves, sufficient in ourselves to deal with sin and temptation and the Evil One, but that we are only strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

I like a statement that Marcus Rainsford made in this connection on pages 279 and 280. He said that there never was a case, or a circumstance, or a sorrow, or a sin, or a difficulty for which there was not a remedy and a supply in His fulness and in His Love. *Our need suits His fulness, and His fulness corresponds to our need* (italics mine); there must needs be the infinite variety of cases, and of characters, of temptations, and necessities, which exist among the children of God, in order that there may be full scope, occasion and opportunity for displaying the infinite varieties of the fulness, the love, grace, mercy and salvation laid up in the Lord Jesus Christ for His dear people, and that in their relief and deliverance from all their troubles, *He might win for Himself an everlasting Name* (again, italics mine).

The apostles were in particular need of the Lord's protective care because, as I have said, they were to be the special targets of the Evil One after the Lord returned to heaven and they were left on earth to carry on His work without the benefit of His physical presence. But we are just as much in need of the Lord's protection today. Basically the apostles were the children of God; basically we have the same standing before God as His dear children. Christ has the same concern for us as He had for them, and they had the same need for Christ as we have today.

But what are we to say about God keeping us from the Evil One? It is obvious to us all that there are many things that the Lord does not keep us from. He does not keep us from the Devil's ways of tempting us to sin. It is true that the Bible says in James 1:14 "every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." When we are saved we are given a new nature, but we don't lose our old nature. We still have the capacity to sin and the inclination to give in to temptation. Sin is no longer our master, but we can yield to temptation and sin against the Lord. God does not spare us from temptation. Nor does He always keep us from sin.

God not keep us from situations in which we have conflicts with other believers. God does not keep us from

discouraging situations along with the trial of not seeing our prayers answered. God does not keep us from sickness and death, times when the Devil is ready to attack us. God does not keep us from persecution. God does not keep us from humiliating failures, or in our service for the Lord. He doesn't keep us from accidents. He doesn't keep us from storms, hurricanes, tornadoes, and the like. He does not keep us from sin. God does not save us from the grief of having children, or others we love, who do not walk with the Lord.

But neither does He ever abandon us! God makes our tribulations work for us. He works all things together for our good, and for His glory. When we sin, He uses a trying circumstance like that to make us sensitive toward all sins, and strengthens us against future sins. At other times He uses our failures, our trials, what we call the misfortunes in our lives, for our chastening, that we might be holy as He is holy. In all things it is the keeping, protecting, preserving of us, to work together for good. Only God can speak of making us more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom. 8:37).

There are times when He keeps us from sin, or from trials. But He also keeps us through our trials. Joseph told his brothers who sold him into slavery, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good." The greatest tragedy that there ever has been on earth, was the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, but God used the sufferings of His Son to provide salvation for countless numbers of sinners throughout all of human history. God saves us, and He keeps us. As we have already seen in this holy prayer, the Lord Jesus said of all whom the Father had given to Him, He had lost nothing! The Father has answered our Savior's prayer, and He continues to answer it every day of every year, from eternity to eternity! Through all of our trials, disappointments, sorrows, and failures, we are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed at the last time" (1 Peter 1:5).

This is a good place to say, "Praise the Lord," isn't it?

But let us go on to verse 16.

17:16 These are the same words which the Lord spoke at the end of verse 14. Repetition in Scripture is always for the sake of emphasis. It expresses how important this fact was to the Lord, and it ought to be important to us. This is why we are not to be conformed to the world in our way of living. And this is why we are hated by the world. And beyond that, the world hates us, rejects us, does not want to have anything to do with us because we have the Word of God. As I have said before, the Word of God is God's gift to His people. And so only a redeemed heart is going to treasure the Word of God.

Perhaps one reason the Lord said this again, as He did in verse 14, is because there are times when the people of God live as though they are still "of the world." Even going into many churches today, especially the large churches, is like going into a theater. And they are inclined to try to attract people to their churches in the same way that the world attracts people into their theaters – by entertainment! But this gives both Christians and the people of the world. We are not called to entertain; we are called to evangelize and to edify. To state it as clearly as possible, our calling in the church is "to preach the Word." If we attract people by entertainment, that is the only way you are going to be able to keep them. But if what people hear when they come to our churches, is the Word of God, then they know that if they come back, that is what they are going to hear. A person who is truly "not of the world," is going to be looking for the Word of God. The Lord Jesus evidently would not feel very comfortable in churches where music is the important part, but even that is often patterned after the continually changing style that is current in the world. When the Lord said, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world," He was indicating that if the apostles wanted to be pleasing to God in their lives, in their service, and in their worship, then our focus needs to be on the Lord, and pleasing Him. The great possibility concerning this part of our Lord's prayer, is that when a person professes to be "of the Lord," but acts and talks and dresses, or undresses, like the world, he or she probably still is "of the world." But the

Lord knew that that was not the case with the apostles. They were not perfect, but they had been changed. A Christian is one who has been “called out of darkness,” the spiritual darkness that is in the world, “into His marvelous light” (1 Pet, 2:9). Our Lord was stating here that since the apostles now belonged to the Lord they would show that they were saved because they were changed. The Apostle John was expressing this great truth when he wrote in 1 John 4:4-6:

4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

5 They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.

6 We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

The proof that a person has been saved is not that he has gone forward in a crusade, nor that he has joined a church. It is not that he has been baptized, or that he is giving his money to the church. It is that his life has been changed. He no longer walks in the darkness, the ignorance, the perversion of the world, but he walks, or is learning to walk, in the light which he finds in the Word of God. Make sure that you know what that change is.

But now we go on to verse 17.

17:17 This is a very, very important request, and so a very important verse. Several times you have heard me say that there are three parts to salvation. They are justification, sanctification, and glorification. If you are a Christian, you have been justified. So that is past. It has to do with your standing before God. You have been cleared of all charges that were against you in the court of heaven, and have been declared righteous through Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells,

For He [God] hath made Him [Jesus Christ] to be sin for us, Who [Christ] knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him [Christ].

This is the same for every Christian, and it is permanent. To be justified is to be perfectly acceptable to God.

Jumping to the third of these words, glorification, this speaks of what we will be when we get to heaven, we will be like the Lord. We will lose our ability to sin. Personally and practically we will be like our Savior. We are not perfect now, but we will be then. Sin will never again be a problem for us. Glorification is salvation in the future tense of our salvation, so to speak.

But here in John 17:17 the Lord Jesus prayed about the second phase of salvation, which is what is going on now in the life of every true Christian. And we can speak of it as salvation in the present tense. As Christians we are being sanctified. To be sanctified is to be made holy. Peter was speaking of a Christian’s sanctification when he quoted from the OT from what God had told His people in OT times: “Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:16).

When the Lord prayed to the Father, “Sanctify them,” He, of course, as this prayer shows was speaking of the apostles. The apostles had been justified, and now the Lord was praying for their sanctification. Nobody can be sanctified unless they have been justified. So only true Christians can be sanctified. And the Lord expressed the word sanctified in such a way as to indicate that He was speaking a word that God would do in all of its entirety. This is not a single act, but it is a process that is going on in your life, and my life, right now and day after day until we are finally with the Lord. Sanctification means to be growing spiritually. And the instrument which God uses for our sanctification is the Word of God. I firmly believe that no one is ever justified except through the Word, and the same is true of our sanctification. It comes about as a result of our learning the teachings of Scripture, and, by God’s grace, obeying what God has told us what He wants us to do, or what He doesn’t want us to do. In the Word of God we have the truth of God. That is why we all need to be

constantly reading the Word of God, attend a church where the Word of God is taught, and we need to be asking the Lord to enable us to obey the Word. The more we learn about our Lord in the Word, and seek to be like Him by obeying the Word, the more sanctification is taking place in our hearts and is expressed in the way we live. But remember that sanctification is God's work in us. We have responsibilities especially concerning the Word of God, but we don't sanctify ourselves; God sanctifies us. That is why the Lord prayed to the Father, "Sanctify them through thy truth." God's truth is to be found in His Word, the Bible. If a person neglects the Bible, the progress of his sanctification can be slowed down proportionately.

Bishop Ryle expressed sanctification in these words:

It is a prayer that the Father would make His people more holy, more spiritual, more pure, more saintly in thought and word and deed, in life and character. Grace had done something for the apostles already – called, converted, renewed, and changed them. The great Head of the Church prays that the work of grace may be carried higher and further, and that His people may be more thoroughly sanctified, and made holy in body, soul, and spirit –in fact, more like Himself (II, 441).

And then Bishop Ryle added this statement in the next paragraph showing how important it is for all of us to be sanctified. He said, "Holy living is the great proof of the reality of Christianity." There is nothing that will make a greater impact upon those are "in the world" and "of the world" than the testimony of a life that has been transformed by the Gospel. And it seems that the Lord had this in mind when He went on to say what He did in verse 18.

17:18 There are three main reasons why we need to be concerned about our sanctification. The first is because it is how we please God. The second reason is because this is the only way for a Christian to experience the blessing of the Lord. And the third reason is because this is what gives power to our witness in the world. This latter is what the Lord was praying about in this verse. The Father had sent our Lord into the world. Now the Lord was leaving, and He was sending His apostles into the world. This was the same world that it is today – a world of sin, a world that had no place for God or for Christ, a world that was in rejection of the Gospel, a world that was really satisfied the way things were, but always hoping that things could get better on their terms. So the task before the apostles was not an easy task. In fact, there could be no more difficult task. The Lord was sending them into the world to do a work that was completely impossible for them. They had not been able to change their own hearts; how could they expect to see changes in the hearts of those who were not only "in the world," but "of the world."

We must remember that though the eleven men who were upon the Lord's heart for prayer, were called to be leaders in the work of the Lord after He returned to the Father, yet they were just men, spiritually weak men, men who did not have in themselves the resources to do what the Lord had called them to do. They did not know at this time what was ahead of them. The Lord had told them that He was going to build His Church, but they really had no conception of what that would mean to them. But, in spite of how difficult it must have been for them to think of going on without Him, yet it must have been encouraging to them to have their ministry in the world to be linked with the ministry that the Lord had had in the world. And in verse 19 our Lord pointed out that He would devote Himself to their sanctification. This means that the Lord is always more concerned about the servant than He is about the service. Our sanctification for all of us is the key to our blessing and usefulness in the work of the Lord. The Lord's part in their service is emphasized in verse 19.

17:19 The Lord said, "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself."

We know that the Lord did not need sanctification in the same way that the apostles needed it. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we are told that "He knew no sin," that is, that sin never had been, and never would be, a part of His character. In Hebrews 4:15 we are told that the Lord Jesus was "without sin." Peter said in 1 Peter 2:22 that

He did no sin.” And John said in 1 John 3:5, “in Him is no sin.” In John 8:46 the Lord asked His enemies, the Jewish leaders, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” The word “convinceth” can be translated *convicteth*. But no charge was made against the Lord. The incarnation of Christ made no change at all in His Deity.

What, then, did the Lord mean, “For their sakes I sanctify Myself”? There are at least two possible interpretations, and probably both may apply here.

First, notice that the Lord said, “For their sakes . . .” He may have been speaking of the Cross where after God laid our sins upon Christ (Isa. 53:6), He put them away by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 9:26), thus assuring their eventual, total and final sanctification, as it did their justification and their glorification. It was all “for their sakes.”

But it could also be a reference to the ministry of our Lord as the High Priest of His people, the Lord using the word “sanctify” in its basic meaning of being *set apart*. The High Priestly ministry of our Lord, His intercessory prayers on their behalf, secured their sanctification from sin. That is why we have Hebrews 7:25 in our Bibles:

25 Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

The word “uttermost” is the Greek for *completely, perfectly, forever*. *What this amounted to on the Lord’s side, He was pledging Himself to be praying faithfully for them, that they might be faithful and fruitful in the work that He was leaving them to do. To save them completely included their justification, their sanctification, and their glorification, the emphasis here being on their sanctification. This teaches us that our primary witness is our life, which, in turn, supports and gives power to our verbal witness.* The Lord sent His disciples into the world to *be* witnesses. This comes first. What we are is what causes people, under the blessing of the Lord, to listen to what we say.

You may remember the story of the Church’s first martyr in Acts 6. There had been great blessing in Jerusalem. Literally thousands of people had been saved. Even many Jewish priests had been saved. But there were certain officials of the Jews, representing the synagogue, who argued with Stephen. But Luke in writing about this made this statement: “And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake” (Acts 6:10). It was the power of the man that made his words so forceful. And, in addition, there was a special manifestation given to Stephen which was peculiar to that occasion because we are also told,

15 And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel (Acts 6:15).

Granted, this was a very special occasion, but it proves the statement which I believe was in the Lord’s mind as He prayed for His apostles, that we are the witnesses by what we are, and it is what we are that gives power to our words.

The Lord was setting Himself apart before the Lord to die for the apostles, and then to pray continuously for them that He might save them completely, perfectly, and forever, thus making their testimony effective for the glory of God and the salvation of those who were “in the world” and “of the world,” who had been given by God to Christ for a salvation that lacked nothing and would never end.

Now we come to the third and last division of our Lord’s prayer:

III. OUR LORD PRAYS FOR ALL FUTURE BELIEVERS (John 17:20-26).

A fact that was established in the last section, and is clearly emphasized in this third and last section, is *that the people of God need to be prayed for*. It doesn't make any difference where in the scale of believers a person may be, all, apostles, pastors, elders, deacons, or the masses of the Lord's people, all need those who will pray for them. And it is not that either the Lord, or someone else, is going to pray for them, but the Lord *and* every other believer who will pick up the burden. The more people we get to pray for us, the more glory it will bring to our heavenly Father. The Apostle Paul recognized this because we see him saying repeatedly, "Brethren, pray for us," of something just like that. Even our Lord Jesus Christ in His earthly ministry needed the prayers of Peter, James, and John. You will remember that as they entered the Garden of Gethsemane, the Lord, having taken them into the inner part of the Garden with Him, said to them, "Tarry ye here, and watch with Me" (Matt. 26:38). When the Lord came back and found them sleeping, not praying, He said to them, "Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Matt. 26:41), is proof that we need to pray for ourselves. Add to all of this the very fact that the Lord "ever lives to make intercession for us" (Heb. 7:25), is proof that we desperately need His prayers.

All of this makes it very clear that we always need to be what Charles Fuller of the Old Fashioned Revival Hour called, "praying ground." By this he meant that we always need to be in such a relationship with the Lord that He will hear our prayers. We need to be living in fellowship with the Lord, walking in obedience to His commandments, and in fellowship with each other. The importance of prayer cannot be overemphasized. Paul said it all regarding prayer when he wrote to the church and Thessalonica, and said to them, "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess. 5:17). And James wrote in his epistle, for our encouragement, that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man [or of a righteous woman] availeth much" (Jas. 5:16b).

After Saul had been stopped by the Lord on the road to Damascus, and then was led into the city because he had been blinded, the Lord appeared to one of the believers by the name of Ananias, telling him where he could find Saul, the Lord said about Saul, "Behold, he prayeth" (Acts 9:11). I am sure that Saul had *said* prayers before, perhaps one of those Pharisees who for a pretense to others has said long prayers with endless repetitions, but now having come to know the Lord, "he prayeth." That did not mean that he had just prayed a single prayer, but that he was praying continuously! And verse 12 of Acts 9 tells us that in answer to his prayers he had "seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight." So we know at least one thing that he had been praying about, and how God answered that prayer.

17:20 Arthur Pink said that the words "for them also" in this verse means that the requests that our Lord prayed for the apostles, were requests that the Lord intended "for them also that shall believe on Me through their word." If we can think of this as our Lord's prayer list, think how long it is now. And who knows how much longer it will be before it is completed. The Lord does not need to have a written list, as we probably have, because we are written upon His heart. He never overlooks any of His people, and so He never forgets a single person. And what is most amazing, He never gets us mixed up with each other. My needs and your needs are just as clear to Him as if we were the only ones He prays for.

There is encouragement for us all in what the Lord mentioned in this part of the prayer. The Lord was sending His disciples into a world that hated them, and that had hated Him, the worst part of that hatred all of them were yet to see. The world hated their message. But in spite of all of the opposition they would face, the Lord by His prayer here indicated that more would believe through the very message that the apostles would give to them. This should have helped any of them who were questioning whether or not the work of the Lord would survive if the Lord did not stay with them. Perhaps they remembered that the Lord had said to them back in John 14:12:

12 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.

The Lord indicated that they would do “greater works” than He had done “because,” as He said, “I go unto My Father.” One example of how that proved to be true is what happened on the following Day of Pentecost. More people were saved in that one day than, as far as the Gospel record is concerned, than had been saved under all of the Lord’s ministry on earth. And we know that today the Gospel has gone to all of the nations of the earth, a fact that would have seemed incredible to the apostles in the beginning. As far as we understand the humanity of our Lord, if He had stayed on earth, He would have been limited to one place at a time. But going back to the Father, He could be every place at the same time.

But it is clear that the Gospel was never limited by those who opposed it. Neither is it today. Even when those who do not believe are more numerous than those who do believe, yet the Lord continues to claim for Himself those who previously were opposed to the Gospel. So the Lord was not praying about the days ahead because it might fail if He didn’t pray, but He prayed because He knew that under the blessing of God it would not, and could not, fail.

And notice in this verse that those who had been saved would be the Lord’s instruments in reaching those who would yet be saved. The Lord could have done the work by Himself. Or He could have commissioned angels to do it. But instead He called the apostles to Himself, and then commissioned them to go into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature. He did it this way for His own glory. By the time we finish reading through the Gospels, we realize even on the eve of the Lord’s crucifixion that the apostles were among the weakest of people. That was no by mistake, or because stronger men had not been saved, but it was by design! And why? Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 1:29, “That no flesh should glory in His presence.” And then in verse 31 of that same first chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul quoted from Jeremiah 9:23-24 the part that says, “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord”!

So the fact that more were going to believe “through their word,” *i.e.*, through the word of the apostles, was not for the apostles to glory in, nor for others to say it was by the apostles that the Gospel spread, and increased. It was by the power of an Almighty God Who laughs in heaven when even the kings of this earth take counsel against Him and against His Son.

In these days of all the political wrangling that is going on, when men boast about themselves and what they are going to do, and criticize everybody else, let us remember that the affairs of nations, even our beloved nation, are not in kings or presidents or anyone else. God is working out His own purposes, and if the whole world were to rise in opposition to Him, with one word, or even by the breath of His mouth, they all could be overthrown in an instant of time. What a surprise these politicians are in for when they stand before the throne of the living God! No wonder they will cry for the rock and the mountains to fall upon them to hide them from His wrath. But there will be no hiding place!

But what was the Lord’s request for those who would believe, and for those who had believed during our Lord’s ministry? Verse 21 tells us.

17:21 “That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us.”
Let me take the verse just that far for the present.

This is not the first time this request had come from our Lord’s lips. Look at the latter part of verse 11 beginning with the words with which our Lord addressed His Father: “Holy Father, . . .” (Read the whole statement.)

Whether we are thinking about the nation Israel in the OT, or the Church of Jesus Christ, the body of Christ, in the NT, oneness is an all-important factor with God for His people. When God gave His plan to Moses for the

garment of the high priest, I hope that you remember that on the breastplate of the high priest, there were twelve precious stones, and on each stone was engraved the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. Also, on the shoulders of the high priest, on two onyx stones, were engraved the names of the twelve tribes of Israel – six on one stone on one shoulder, and the other six on the other stone on the other shoulder. On the breastplate over the heart of the high priest we see that from the different stones, the tribes were all different, but each one was equally precious to God. The shoulder represented strength, and there we see how God had this way of pledging His strength equally to all of the tribes, to sustain and to protect each tribe by His sovereign power! BUT, when we read the history of Israel, we read about a divided nation. But that is not all. We read of divisions among the tribes of Israel and among the two tribes of Judah. Nobody can possibly calculate the blessings that the nation missed because of their divisions.

But then let us look at the Church, the bride of Christ and the body of Christ. What do we see there? We see division again. In fact, the history of the Church is a history of division. And yet we have this amazing statement, written by the Apostle Paul under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and sent originally to the churches of Galatia. Let me read to you what Paul wrote in Galatians 3:26-28:

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Notice the last statement of these three verses: “For ye are all one in Christ Jesus.”

The people of Israel did not need to make themselves one; God made them one from the beginning of their existence as a nation. The Church does not need to make herself one. There is only one bride of Christ. There is only one body of Christ. The Church was born as one Church on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. That was the first time there ever was the baptism of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:13 tells us this:

13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

All of us, all who are trusting in Jesus Christ for salvation, were baptized by one Spirit into one body, the body of Christ. We are different members of that Body, but there is just one Body.

But when we look at Christians today we see all kinds of churches, and you also find that most present-day Christians don't know what you are talking about when you talk about the Church, the body of Christ. If Christians today pay any attention to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, they think that the filling of the Spirit and the baptism of the Spirit are the same thing. But that is because they don't read their Bibles carefully.

Now the truth about Israel is that they did not need to make themselves one nation; God made them one nation. And the same is true of the Church although the Church and Israel are distinct from each other. We don't make the Church one; God has already done that. Remember what Galatians 3:28 tells us: “Ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” There is just one Church, made up in this present age of all who truly are trusting Christ for their salvation, and baptized into that one body which is the Church.

And yet we sing in that marching hymn of the Church, *Onward, Christian Soldiers*,

Like a mighty army, Moves the Church of God;

Brothers, we are treading where the saints have trod;

We are not divided, all one body we,

One in hope and doctrine, one in charity.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if that were true! We are one body. We have one hope. We have one doctrine, and that is the Bible. And we certainly should be one in charity, which is love. But in reality, from a human standpoint we are hopelessly divided in our hope, in our doctrine, and there is very little true love shown among the

different branches of the Church as it is today. The world is in a hopeless mess, and the Church is far from what the Spirit of God made us to be.

Years ago some church leaders sought to correct this problem, and they originated what was called an Ecumenical Movement. But they couldn't agree about the Bible, whether it was the Word of God, or not. And they couldn't agree about Jesus. Many church leaders did not, and still do not, believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. They couldn't believe about salvation. They really couldn't believe in any of the fundamental doctrines of the Church. They were trying to make the professing church one, but the main problem was that they couldn't agree about the Bible. God made the Church one. And with true believers there still is a oneness. But what do you think that the people of the world think that the Church is, or that a Christian is, when they look at the those who profess to be the church today. Catholics use that word, church. Liberal theologians use that word, church, but they deny practically everything that the Bible teaches. Even homosexuals use the word church.

Because of the popularity (in a good sense) of Pastor John MacArthur, who is the Pastor of the Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California, churches are springing up all over our country where the people have taken the name, Grace Community Church. Dr. MacArthur was asked if this bothered him. His answer was that what bothered him in many instances was that some of them were called a church. The Greek word for church means *called out*. A church is a group of people called out by God from the world, set apart from the world to live holy lives which are pleasing to God, and left in the world to be a witness to the world of the saving grace of Jesus Christ by which sinners are delivered from the judgment of God. It is what our Lord had in mind in this Lord's prayer when He spoke of His people as in the world, but not of the world. It is a sad fact, and yet it is true, that there are hundreds of people, probably it is more accurate to say, thousands of people, in our country who are members of some local church, but they are not members of the true Church, the Body of Christ, because they do not know nor acknowledge that Jesus Christ is their personal Savior. We will never find a perfect church. But those pastors and elders and deacons who understand what a true church is, are responsible to limit their membership only to those who profess faith in Christ as the only Savior from sin. But in spite of all the precautions we take, there will always be those who attend good churches who are not saved. What the Lord was praying about was that His people, those who know Christ in salvation, would maintain their oneness with other believers, a oneness which is as close and patterned as the oneness which God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ have with each other.

For us this is a oneness which is founded upon the teachings of the Bible, not just some of the teaching, but all of the teaching, that it, and it alone, is the inerrant and eternal word of God. It is a oneness that is focused upon the Person of Christ, that is, Who He is, the Son of God, and of His work of salvation which He accomplished by His death and resurrection. It is a oneness based upon the conviction that the Bible teaches us how to live so as to have the blessing of God.

But in speaking of our oneness in the body of Christ, we must not overlook what the Apostle Paul wrote about oneness in his epistle to the Ephesians. Please turn with me to Ephesians 4, and follow in your Bible as I begin reading with verse 1. (Read vv. 1-6, and then vv. 11-16.) And then I would add what Paul wrote about the Christian life, what it is not, and what it is, continuing from verse 17 of Ephesians 4 on down through chapter 6 and verse 9 in which Paul was teaching the Ephesians (and us) what he said we are all to be doing, "proving what is acceptable [well pleasing] to the Lord" (Eph. 5:10). The Christian life is not what we think it should be, but it is what God says it is, right down to what He has said about the home!

AND, coming now to the last statement of verse 21, all of this oneness among true believers is what the Lord is going to use, as our Lord said to the Father, "that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." You see, it is not what many churches are doing to win people to the Lord today, making their services as much like the

world as they can to attract people to their services, but it is the oneness that we have together with each, that will make people in the world believe, as the Lord said, “that Thou has sent Me.” When people believe that, that is the first step that leads ultimately to their salvation. When a person believes that, they can no longer ignore the fact that Jesus Christ had to be a special Person, and that what He did had to be a unique work which could not be done by any person who was not like Jesus was. Our Lord did not mean that everyone who sees a difference among professing Christians would come to Christ, but, if they are to be saved, this is how they are going to be reached.

May 13, 2008

And now let us move on to John 17:22.

17:22 Bishop Ryle, in his commentary on the Gospel of John mentions seven different interpretations that he had come across in his study of this verse in John 17. This is where I think that commentaries can be a hindrance and not a help in interpreting Scripture. What we need to do is to look at the chapter, in this case the seventeenth chapter of John, to see if there are any clues here as to the meaning of a particular verse. I believe that there is.

The word “glory” should always make us think of God, the glory of the Lord. For example, when the angel of the Lord appeared to the shepherds, announcing to them the birth of Jesus, we read in Luke 2:9,

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

So there was not only an amazing appearance of the angel of the Lord, but also of the glory of the Lord, the appearance of the glory of God Himself.

The Apostle John in writing about the Lord Jesus said in John 1:14,

14 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.

As I have said many times, *The glory of God is God!* When John said, “we beheld His glory,” he meant that what he and others were given to see was evidence in Jesus that He was God.

The Apostle Peter took it a major step forward in speaking of what is true of every believer today when he said in 2 Peter 1:4,

4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

What is the ultimate goal for each one of us in our salvation? Paul said in Romans 8:29 that we are predestinated by God “to be conformed to the image of His Son.” But so we would understand that this doesn’t happen immediately, Paul also told the Corinthian believers what we read in 2 Corinthians 3:18,

18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

The verb translated “are changed,” is a present passive in the Greek, meaning that as he wrote to them, the Holy Spirit was at work in their hearts on a daily basis to make us by degrees, from one degree to the next higher degree, like our Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle John said in 1 John 3:2,

2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

He did not know to what extent we are going to be like the Lord. We are not going to be Deity. But he did know that we are going to be “like Him.” Remember Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer’s comment along this line that I have given to you many times. He used to say that “God is so delighted with His Son, that He is going to fill

heaven with people who are just like He is.”

Now, going back to John 17:22, let us read this in the light of all of these other passages I have given you. Our Lord said, “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one” (John 17:22). Remember how the Lord prayed for Himself in the fifth verse of our chapter:

5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was (John 17:5).

The glory which the Father gave to His incarnate Son to reveal the Father on earth, the Son, on the other hand, has given to those whom the Father had given to Him. So this means that the more you and I become like the Lord Jesus, the greater will be our oneness with God and with each other even while we are here on earth.

The Lord here was praying about the primary objective of our salvation. It was not just to save us from the penalty of our sins, which our Lord did when He died for us on the Cross – although that was a major purpose of our salvation. Nor was the primary purpose of our salvation to save us from the power and control of sin in our lives. Although this was another major purpose of our salvation. The primary purpose of our salvation was not to defeat the Devil, although that was a major purpose, and without this the primary purpose of our salvation could not have been realized. We also need to realize that the primary purpose of our salvation was not that some day the Lord would take us to be with Him in heaven. That is a major, major purpose, one which we are all looking forward to, and, as you know from your reading of John 17, it was a purpose that the Lord was looking forward to with the greatest possible anticipation. No, *the main purpose of our salvation was that we would be made like the Lord Jesus Christ*. And this does not mean just in physical appearance even though we are going to have bodies like His glorified body. See Philippians 3:20-21:

20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

But the main change will be in us, in our character. “We shall be like Him” (1 John 3:2).

We are not going to be Deity. Theologians like to say that God has two kinds of attributes, or characteristics: those that are communicable, and those which are incommunicable. To state it another way, there are characteristics of God which he imparts to us, but there others that He does not, and cannot, impart to us. He imparts to us His love, His mercy, His holiness, His patience, His strength, His will, His knowledge, His wisdom, His righteousness, His humility. But we do not partake of His immensity which is His omnipresence. We do not partake of His infinite perfection, or of His eternity. I am not giving you a complete list of His attributes, but I believe I am giving you enough to see what parts of God’s nature we partake of. We begin partaking of the communicable attributes the moment we are saved, but there is a sense in which all people are born in some likeness to God because we are made in His image, in His likeness. We all are born with a sense of right and wrong. We are born with a knowledge that there is a God. However, for those of us who know the Lord, the work of God in which we are made to partake of some of the characteristics of God is called sanctification, and it will ultimately lead to our glorification.

In a practical sense, what does this mean for us? It means that in salvation we have been brought into a living union with Christ. He and we are one. And as we grow through faith and obedience to God in our fellowship with the three Members of the Godhead, we are being conformed more and more into the likeness of Christ. And the more we grow, the more we are sanctified, the greater will be the degree to which we express our oneness in Christ.

17:23 The word “one” appears in John 17 six times. See it in verses 11, 21 (2x), 22 (2x), 23. By the divisions of the prayer you can immediately see that our Lord used it once as he prayed for the apostles, but that the special emphasis was upon that part of His prayer that was for “them also which shall believe on Me through their word” (v. 20). The Lord was not only anticipating the continuation of His work on earth in the hearts of His people, but its culmination. There was nothing more vital that the Lord could have prayed for His people than this.

I feel sure that we all have asked ourselves as we look at overwhelming wickedness in the world today, and then think of the Church which is far from what it ought to be, **how should we in the true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ pray for ourselves as we approach the end of this age and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ?** When the disciples looked at the crowd which had been listening to the Lord and watching Him as He performed miracles, but now needed food for their bodies, they looked at the little boy’s lunch of “five barley loaves, and two small fish,” and then they said in the light of the great need to feed probably at least ten thousand people, said, “But what are they among so many?” (John 6:9).

There may be more Christians in our country than we think, but it surely seems like we are a minority. There is a lot of noise and activity among many who profess the name of Christ, but that appears to be a lot of froth! When we look at our country, and then add to that the other nations of the world, and see the need, we all should be asking, comparing ourselves to that great need, “But what are we among so many?” I believe we have the answer right here in John 17. Let me read to you again verses 20 through 23, as we come to verse 23. **(Read John 17:20-23.)**

Marcus Rainsford said that “this consummation was the joy set before Him, for which He “endured the cross, despising the shame” (Heb. 12:2).

There are two verses in Isaiah’s prophecy that are often quoted to show how different God’s ways are from our ways. I am speaking of Isaiah 55, verses 8 and 9. Let me remind you of what they say:

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

But have you ever read the whole fifty-fifth chapter to notice in particular what the theme of the chapter is? I want to read it to you in just a moment, but let me say at the beginning, and I think that you will see this clearly as I read it, that this is a chapter on evangelism, seeking to get people in that ancient day to turn to the Lord. But you might ask, What does Isaiah 55 have to do with John 17? Well, I hope you remember that I pointed out earlier in our study of John 17 that the Lord mentioned the world no less than nineteen times in these 26 verses. And especially as the Lord prayed for the coming generations of the church, He was concerned that the world would believe that He had been sent into the world by God, the Father. Look at the end of verse 21, and you will see the same thing again in verse 23 which we are now studying. The Lord prayed what He prayed in the beginning of verse 21 “that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.” And then at the end of verse 23 we read again about the same thing, “that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them (*i.e., the believers, the Church*) as Thou hast loved Me.”

I doubt if any of us would have thought of this part of our Lord’s prayer as having anything to do with evangelizing the world if the Lord had not pointed out how we are going to get the attention of the world, and what it is that they need to “believe” and “know,”

Now let us read what Isaiah the prophet and the evangelist said about preaching the Gospel in His day. I hope you have your Bible open to Isaiah 55 as I read it:

1 Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

2 Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

3 Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

4 Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people.

5 Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee.

6 Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near:

7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

12 For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

13 Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

I realize that this chapter may have a future fulfillment when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ, but I want you to see the principle that the Lord stated in verses 8 and 9:

8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.

9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

The Lord was telling the people in Isaiah's day, and it has been recorded for His people today, for you and me, that if we are going to see people turn to the Lord in a genuine and lasting way, the method has to be His, not ours. I don't like the word *radical* because there are so many things that are going on today that are harmful and perverse, but the word *radical* according to the dictionary means, of all things, *fundamental*, or *proceeding from the root*. So I use the word *radical* with the idea of, as we often say, *getting back to the basics*. When even professing Christians come up with an idea about how to evangelize the world, you can usually be sure that it is not going to work. Isaiah said here that God's ways and not only different from our ways, but they are higher and better, meaning much more effective. Isaiah 55 points us to the need in the world, and then turns us to God to show us the way to reach the world in a convincing and effective way. Nothing in Scripture tells us that everybody we seek to reach, even in God's way, is going to be saved. But it does indicate that when we use God's way, those we reach His way are going to be those who come to the Lord, and stay! Marcus Rainsford said in his book on John 17 that when the Lord prayed as He did in verses 20 through 23, His supplication for His people in the world, to reach the world, was complete.

Then Rainsford went on to say this, taking the first three words of verse 23:

"I in them." Amazing indwelling! – not only My love in them, Mine interests with them, My fulness, My Spirit, their portion, – but I Myself in them, the inexhaustible Fountain of their holiness, and happiness, the fulness of their glory, their inheritance, and their crown! "I in them" – not only *with* them forever, not only *for* them, and against all those that are opposed to them, not only *near* them, but "in them," as their very life and glory . . .

"I in them" – in all of them, he least of them as well as the greatest, the most ignorant of them as well

as the most instructed. “I in them” – in them as their portion forever (p. 417).

But the Lord not only said, “I in them,” but He went on to say to the Father, “And Thou in Me.” Would I be overstating case that in the epistles of the NT we find the meaning and the glory and the importance of these of these words to the delight and comfort and strengthening of our souls? And what is the effect of these great truths upon the body of believers? There are two, both introduced by that little conjunction, *ἵνα*, which means *in order that*:

- 1) “In order that they may be made perfect in one.”
- 2) “In order that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me.”

We learned in John 15 that the world hated the Lord, and that this being true, the disciples should expect that they would receive the same treatment from the world that the Lord received. Some people in the world are not openly hostile to Christians, but they don’t want to have anything to do with them. But when the people of the world see what God is doing in the hearts of believers, uniting them in true spiritual oneness, if people are going to have their hearts changed toward the Lord and toward the Gospel, the evidence of what the Lord has done in the hearts of His people, not only in their relationship to Him, but toward each other, this will bring them to the place that they “know” that the Gospel is true because there is nothing in all the relationships that people have with each other like the relationship that they have with each other and with God and Christ and the Holy Spirit.

All of this wonderful truth actually goes back to what the Lord told the apostles in the Upper Room as recorded in John 13:34, 35. (Quote.)

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17:24 We come in verse 24 to the last of the requests that the Lord prayed first for Himself, secondly for the apostles (requests which also were for all other future believers), and then third for all future believers (which also would have been for the apostles).

The Lord’s request for Himself was that He might again be glorified (vv. 1, 5).

There were two major requests that our Lord prayed for the apostles. The first is in verse 11; the second, in verse 17. The first was that the Father would keep them; the second was that He would sanctify them. Attached to the first request was an expansion which is mentioned in verse 11, “that they be one as we are.” The Lord referred to this oneness again in verses 21, 22, and 23. And a second expansion can be seen at the end of verse 13, “that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.”

But then we see that as a result of the Lord keeping His own, and sanctifying them, there would be a third result which is mentioned in verse 21: “that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me” (with a similar statement in v. 23).

In connection with the Lord’s third request that His own be with Him where He was going, this was so “that they may behold My glory.”

But there is one other result, or probably two in one would be a better way to express it, that is to be seen in verse 26 right at the end of the prayer: “That the love wherewith Thou hast love Me, may be in them, and I in them.”

So there are four major requests in our Lord's prayer:

- 1) The first for His own glorification (vv. 1, 5).
- 2) Three requests for His own:
 - a) For them to be kept by the Father (v. 11).
 - b) For them to be sanctified by the Word (v. 17).
 - c) For them to be in heaven (v. 24).

And in answering these requests, there would be at least four results for the disciples: oneness, joy, ultimately seeing the Lord's glory, and love in union with Christ.

Matthew Henry reminds us as we come to this verse as our Lord was closing His prayer, that He was dealing here with the precious truth of glorification. All through the Psalm the Lord referred to His own as *those whom the Father had given to Him*. By these words the Lord was not referring to something that the Father had done just prior to the Son's coming to the earth. He gave His own to the Son before the foundation of the world. Our Lord was speaking of the believer's election to salvation. He was speaking of that great multitude from every tribe and tongue and nation in every generation who were appointed to salvation. They are those who were in great need because of sin, a need which none of them could possibly have met, but which in the course of time had been convicted of their sin, had believed in Christ, and had been thoroughly and eternally justified by the work of Christ on the Cross. The prayer had to do with the sanctification of the redeemed. That is especially clear from verse 17 of this prayer, but also from everything else in the prayer. Now, as we come to verse 24, we come to the subject of glorification! Matthew Henry said that God was not in the category of the man who built his house upon the sand, nor in the category of the man who set out to build a tower only to learn that he did not have the money to finish. There is enough merit in the work of Christ, and enough power in the Godhead, to bring to glory every person whom God had chosen in eternity past, and given to His Son for their redemption. It is easy for us to read over a verse like verse 24 in this prayer without realizing what it would take to fulfil such a plan of redemption. And the Lord Jesus prayed the words in this verse knowing that the terrible price for their redemption was to be paid in just a few hours! We can't say that the Lord was not thinking of Himself as He made this final request because He was thinking of the joy that would be His when He became the object of the adoration and praise of the saints gathered together with the Lord Himself as the object of their worship. But He obviously was thinking of them too. The one who wrote the words I have quoted to you before captured what it would mean for our Lord and for us in that great day.

He and I in that bright glory, one deep joy shall share:
Mine, to be forever with Him; His, that I am there.

Arthur Pink says that this was not a reward for the people of God as servants for a work well done, but it was an inheritance for the children of the heavenly Father. And so the Lord Jesus was addressing His Father and their Father. This is the fifth time out of six that our Lord addressed God as "Father." See vv. 1, 5, "Holy Father" in 6, 21, 24, and "righteous Father" in 25. The Lord had just said in verse 22, "And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one."

The Lord had spoken to the apostles about this before back in John 14:2b and 3:

I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Most expositors have notice that the Lord said here, "Father, I will . . ." And this is a correct translation of the word that the Lord used for "will." I am sure that none of us have used this word in prayer. We have prayed that the Lord's will would be done in many matters that we have brought to the Lord, but we have never prayed, "Father, I will . . ." Now there is the possibility that the Lord was using the word "will" to express what was the strong desire of His heart, but I don't think that it would mean that the Lord was opposing His

will on the Father, because there never has been, and never will be, any difference between the will of the Father and the will of the Lord Jesus. I rather prefer to think of this expression by the Lord as meaning that He was in full accord with the Father's will. But we must remember that the Lord said these words just before He went to the Cross, and knowing full well what it would mean to Him to assure that all whom the Father had given to Him would be included in that day.

Also, when the Lord spoke these words, He was anticipating His return to heaven, knowing that between Him and that time there would be that time in Gethsemane where He would sweat drops of blood, then arrested, persecuted as His enemies treated Him shamefully, then the Cross where He would suffer for all those whom the Father had given to Him, raised from the dead, ascended to the Father, knowing that the Father would answer the prayer that He had prayed in verses 1 and 5 of this High Priestly prayer!

Now why did the Lord want the people of God to see Him? I remind you again of what Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:18 and what the Apostle John wrote in 1 John 3:2. Day by day right now as we read our Bibles we are to be seeing the Lord as He is revealed in Scripture in Christ. And the effect of this has been that the Holy Spirit has been changing us to make us by degrees more and more like our Saviour. That work is going to be finished when we see Him face to face. That is going to take place at death if we die before the Lord returns, or if we are blessed to live until the trumpet sounds "and the dead in Christ rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." The key words there are "to meet the Lord in the air." We are not only going to be "with" Him, but we shall be "like" Him. And seeing His glory, *we will be glorified!*

So the Lord's prayer for Himself, will be answered. His pre-redemption glory will have been restored, and this is what will be evident in all of us.

But notice how this verse ends: "for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." The word "for" here is the Greek word which is usually translated *because*. And so we need to ask and answer a question as we come to the end of this truly glorious verse (because it has to do with our glorification). Upon what foundation does the truth expressed in this verse rest? How can we be sure that all of this is going to happen? If you want to speak of something that sound too good to be true, this is it – isn't it?

Well, there could be several answers to this question. We could honestly say that it rests upon the attributes of God. It rests upon the faithfulness of God. He doesn't lie. He never has lied. He has spoken, and He will do it. We could also say that it rests on the power, the sovereign power of God. God never makes promises, or He has never made a promise, which He cannot keep, or about which He might change His mind. Circumstances can never take Him by surprise which He had not counted on before. He promised through Isaiah that "a virgin will conceive, and bare a son." That had never happened before, but it happened with the birth of Jesus, and it never has happened again.

Or we might say that we know that all of this is going to come to pass because of His great love for us! And that would be a good answer. There is nothing more amazing as far as we are concerned than God's love for us. He loves us with an everlasting love, a love that is without beginning, and without ending, and without changing. If He could love us while we were still in our sins, if He could love us when we were His enemies, if He could love us when to prove that love He gave His Son to die for us, then I would say that we are on a sure foundation as far as justification, and sanctification, and glorification, are concerned. I am not going to lie awake at night wondering if all of this is going to take place.

But I still have not given you the Lord's answer. What did the Lord say was our greatest assurance that we are going to be glorified? You have it right there in your Bible at the end of verse 24. Jesus said all of this is abso-

lutely sure to take place “because,” as He said to the Father, “Thou [God] lovedst Me [the Son] before the foundation of the world.” You talk about standing on holy ground, this is it! And this is where I ought to sit down and let someone else do the teaching who can explain these words of our Lord Jesus Christ. They have to be true because they are His words. I am sure that none of the apostles could have come up with a sound explanation of this. But I do know this much about what it means. It means that God the Father loves God the Son sooooo much that He is not going to disappoint the Savior by failing with a single person for whom the Lord gave His life.

We often say that the Lord Jesus began His public ministry when He was baptized. And that is true. But it was John the Baptist who introduced the Lord Jesus at that time. That was such an important moment that it was more than John the Baptist could do. God did not even send an angel to introduce the Lord Jesus. It was an event of such supreme importance that no one but God was qualified to make the introduction. That alone ought to be enough to attract our attention. But what did the Father say? He said what no one else could have said. He said, “This is my beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). Some translate those words, “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I find all my delight.” Don’t believe those who say that God created us because He was lonesome. God finds perfect satisfaction and contentment in His Son. Our greatest claim upon the love of God is our relationship to Jesus Christ. It is totally because of Christ that some day we are going to stand before God conformed to Christ. This is one reason I love that statement of Dr. Chafer that I have quoted to you many times. “God is so delighted with His Son, that He is going to fill heaven with people who are just like He is.” Our security ultimately rests in God’s love for His Son.

I hate to leave this verse, but I need to go on if I am going to finish John 17.

17:25 Here our Lord addresses God for the sixth and last time in this prayer as Father. But it is not just as “Father” as it was four times before, but as “righteous Father.” In verse 11 our Lord called the Father, “Holy Father.” The Father provided salvation for sinners because He is holy and cannot look upon sin. But in carrying out His salvation, He has manifested His absolute righteous character. As a holy Father He could not close His eyes to sin, deciding to overlook it. But in ordering our salvation which is a gift of His grace, He would have been righteous if He had not done anything for man’s salvation. And He would have been righteous if He had determined to save everyone. But because He is righteous, His righteousness has been demonstrated by what He has done – to save those of His own choosing, but not to save all.

So there is no stain upon the righteousness of God because “the world hath not known Thee.” This has always been the world’s basic problem. The world has not known God, the true God, the living God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the world does not want to know Him. The world hates Him. The world rejected Him and killed Him. And if it were possible the world would do the same to Him today. People will trust in finite, flawed politicians, but they will not turn to the one, true God. They are not knocking at the door of salvation. They are content to live in their sin.

But the Lord went on to say, “But I have known Thee.” Remember this is the Man Christ Jesus Who is speaking, the Son of God Who was “made in the likeness of sinful flesh,” yet “without sin.” The Apostle John wrote that “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not” (John 1:10). So the world has not known the Father, nor the Son. But the unique claim of the Son is, “I have known Thee.” And, miracle of miracles, “these,” the apostles, and those “which shall believe shall believe on Me,” the Lord said, “through their word,” that is the message of the apostles, basically the Gospel, “these have known that Thou [God] hast sent Me,” the Lord Jesus. Implied in this statement is the belief that Jesus was the Son of God, and that He came to bring salvation. (Go back and review this statement at the end of verse 21, and again at the end of verse 23.) This is the result of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Lord’s mission was not in vain. This

shows the power of the Gospel. As the Apostle John wrote in 1 John 4:14-15:

- 14 And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.
15 Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God

And then the Lord continued in verse 26.

17:26 The “them” to whom the Lord refers here are those who had believed that the Father sent the Son. They, by faith, had realized that our Lord was on a divine mission, different from anything that had ever taken place in the world before. John the Baptist had come preparing the way of the Lord, but when the Lord came, John the Baptist stepped aside.

But what did the Lord mean when He said, “And I have declared unto them,” *i.e.*, to those who have known that God sent our Lord, “Thy Name, and will declare it.” What Name of God was the Lord talking about? I give you Marcus Rainsford’s answer to that question:

Yes, He had told them, and He tells us what it is, “Father”! God desires to be thought of by us [believers] as a Father, spoken to as a Father, loved as a Father, and obeyed as a Father, and our Father’s Name is “love” (p. 448).

Think of how many times in the Gospels the Lord Jesus is quoted as referring to God as Father, such as, “When ye pray, say, Our Father . . .” (Luke 11:2).

The last words of this prayer give us the Lord’s description of what the lives of the people of God should be, or perhaps it would be better to say, the lives of the members of the family of God should be. The Lord said to the Father, “And I will declare unto them Thy Name, and will declare it.” The main purpose of the ministry of the Lord on earth was to declare the truth of God, or to state it another way, to reveal God, with a special emphasis upon the love of God. The word that our Lord used which is translated “declare,” can also mean *to make known*, or *to declare*. Our basic need is to know God. And we know God through Christ. To know God is to know that He is love. But the result of knowing God will be, as our Lord said, “that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

With these words of our Lord we see that it was His desire and prayer that those of us who know the Lord would go deeper and deeper into the knowledge of God, and learn more about the intimate relationship that we enjoy with God and with the Lord Jesus Christ. These are deep truths, but as we grow in our knowledge of God, and of Christ, we will find that our understanding of these truths, God’s love in us, and Christ in us, our union with them and its effect upon our lives, will become clearer to us and more helpful in our lives. It seems that the Apostle Paul had these very truths in mind when he prayed continuously for the people of God the prayer that is recorded for us in Ephesians 3. I hope you will take the time soon to read this whole chapter, but right now I want to read just the prayer for you. Please turn with me to Ephesians 3, and follow as I read verses 13 through the end of the chapter in verse 21. **(Read Ephesians 3:13-21.)**

Let me say one more word about the truth that we have in this intercessory prayer of our Lord before we conclude our study. It has to do with a verse we had earlier in John 16:12-15. **(Read.)** It was in John 17 that the Lord prayed about those “many things” which had to do with our union with Christ and with God – truths that are further explained in the epistles of the NT. It will always be true that the Lord has many things to teach us, things that we desperately need to know. Don’t be discouraged if there are truths here and there in the Word that you don’t understand, or fully understand. Keep reading them, and keep praying for understanding. Seek it, as we are encouraged to do in Proverbs, like we are searching for silver and gold. The Lord will reward us. Our delight in the Word will grow, and so will we grow. I pass on to you a saying of Dr. T. J. Bach, a dear seasoned and mature servant of the Lord who used to come to MSB for our missionary conferences. He used to say, “We need to go deeper that we may go farther.” Let’s all seek to go deeper in the Word so that we can farther in our walk with Him, and more fruitful in the lives we live.