

The Gospel of John (102): Our Lord's High Priestly Prayer (3)

Introduction:

We are presently working through our Lord's high priestly prayer recorded for us in John 17. Last week we began to consider the second major section of this passage, which begins with verse 6 and continues through verse 19. In verses 1 through 5 Jesus had prayed to His Father respecting Himself. But beginning with verse 6, He began to pray for His disciples, or more specifically, His eleven apostles. Not long after this His eleven apostles would appoint Matthias as a replacement for Judas Iscariot, restoring their number to the necessary 12 apostles.¹ Let us consider in more detail how...

II. Jesus prays for His apostles (17:6-19)

We have already considered verses 6 through 8 in which...

A. Jesus rehearsed before His Father His efforts to glorify Him before His disciples. (17:6-8)

Jesus declared to His Father He in all that He did before His apostles and in all that He had taught them, He had set forth His Father before them, teaching them and directing them to understand and to obey His Father's words. Through their relationship with Jesus, the disciples believed that Jesus had come forth from the Father and they had believed that the Father had sent Him into the world as the promised Messiah, the King of Israel. Here once again are verses 6 through 9:

⁶"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. ⁷Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. ⁸For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.

The Lord Jesus had always set forth His Father before His disciples. Where His own wonderful works and words would have brought credit to Himself, Jesus continually placed the Father before them. Jesus could say to His Father, ***"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world"*** (v. 6). Although His own divine glory was hidden from view before all, He disclosed or "manifested" the glory of His Father to His apostles through His earthly ministry that was performed in their presence. Jesus had given them special instruction and the Holy Spirit must have granted them illumination to understand these matters.

The Lord then expressed in His prayer the words of **verse 7**, ***"Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You."*** In the hearing of His disciples Jesus had declared to them, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me" (John 7:16). Our Lord had set forth His Father so consistently and frequently that His disciples had come to understand that they were receiving instruction from God the Father through Him.

And then our Lord prayed to His Father these words in **verse 8**, ***"For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from***

¹ This was due to the Lord Jesus having appointed and entrusted His 12 Apostles to judge (i.e. rule or lead) the Twelve tribes of Israel. The Lord Jesus declared what would occur, the present leaders would be deposed and replaced for they had failed to bring forth fruit for God by the people of God. See Matthew 19:28; 21:33-41.

You; and they have believed that You sent Me.” All that Jesus said and all that He taught during His earthly ministry were words that His Father had given Him to speak. The disciples had grown in their understanding of the vital union and relationship between Jesus and His Father. Their confidence and dependence in Jesus was shown forth in their faith in God His Father.

Jesus described His disciples through three verbs in verse 8: they “received”, they have “known”, they have “believed”. This was the response of the disciples toward Jesus. But although these disciples are commended by Jesus before the Father for their response to Him, Jesus affirmed it was due to the grace of God that they had done so. Jesus had declared, *“I have given to them the words which You have given Me.”* Not only did He proclaim to them the Father’s words, but He had so worked grace in their souls that they had *received* His Word, that they had come *to know* that He had come forth from the Father and represented Him, and that they *believed* that He was indeed the promised Messiah, the One sent from the Father to them. What set these men apart from all others was not due ultimately to their own responsiveness for having *received* His words, their own deductive reasoning in order to *know* that He had come forth from the Father, or even due to their own faith apart from God’s grace to *believe* on Him. They had been the objects of God’s work of grace in their souls to incline their hearts to receive His words, to illuminate their minds to understand who He was in truth, and to incline their souls to believe on Him as having come forth from the Father to reveal the Father and His will to them.

Jesus declared that He had delivered the Father’s words to His disciples. It was God the Father who had sent Jesus His Son to be His prophet to declare His words to His people. God had told Moses that He would one day raise up a prophet before his people who would give them His words. Here is Deuteronomy 28:18 in which God declared to Moses,

“I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and (I) will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.”

God the Father gave the words to Jesus. Jesus spoke these words to His disciples. His disciples believed that the words Jesus spoke were words from God the Father. They loved Jesus. They loved to hear the words of Jesus. They loved to hear the words of God the Father spoken to them through Jesus. So it is with us who believe and desire to hear and learn the Holy Scriptures, the Words of God. When we hear the Holy Scriptures proclaimed, we do hear the words of God proclaimed to us. And we love to hear His words and we love to be able to understand their meaning and significance. We perhaps we love His words most because they reveal Him to us.

Now last Lord’s Day as we were wrapping up, I sought to draw a contrast between Christians and non-Christians, with particular attention to their desire for and attitude toward the Holy Scriptures. Disciples of Jesus Christ love the Word of God. They take to heart our Lord’s teaching in which He declared, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). Where the true Christian loves God’s Word and delights in hearing and understanding His words, the non-Christian has no love for God’s Word as His Word. The Bible is generally a matter of indifference to him. But having said that, we would not want to convey the idea that every Christian will love the Word of God to the degree that he should or that he is always characterized by intensity of affection and desire to know God’s Word. The desire for, and delight in the Word of God, varies from Christian to Christian and even varies in degree at different times in the heart of any one Christian. Love for the Word of God should always be present and it should always be quite acute in one’s soul, but it is not always the case. Love for the Word of God can increase or diminish due to any number of factors. Neglect of regular times in the Word of God will result in a growing apathy and indifference in the heart of the Christian for the Scriptures. But feeding upon, even meditating upon, the Word of God will cause an increasing intensity of desire and appreciation for the Word of God. May the Lord help each of us to be true and faithful to our Lord in these matters. May we be like the psalmist who wrote,

I will delight myself in Your commandments,
Which I love.
My hands also I will lift up to Your commandments,

Which I love,
And I will meditate on Your statutes. (Psa. 119:47f)

Now in the verses before us, take notice of the positive manner in which our Lord Jesus spoke of His disciples to His heavenly Father. He spoke highly of them, commending them to His Father as attentive, teachable, understanding, committed, and ever faithful. There was much that was defective and deficient about them, but Jesus did not bring before His Father their defects and deficiencies. Jesus speaks of them in glowing terms before His Father. This reflects how God regards His elect that are justified before Him through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. Here are the words of **Robert Traill** quoted by **J. C. Ryle**:

“Christ tells all the good He can of His disciples, and covers their failings. How poorly had they received Christ’s word? How weak and staggering was their faith! How oft had Christ reproved them sharply for their unbelief and their faults! Yet not a word of all this in Christ’s representing them to His Father! This is the constant gracious way of our High Priest. He makes no mention of Israel’s faults in heaven, but for their expiation.” Man, alas, does the very contrary of all this! He talks of his neighbor’s faults, but not his graces.²

We who are in Christ should receive encouragement from our Lord Jesus seeking our good and presenting us before the Father in the best possible way. Here are the words of **Thomas Manton** (1620-1677):

Observe, how ready Christ is to take notice of the good that is wrought in us. He watcheth for an occasion to commend us to God. Satan and his instruments, they watch for our halting: Jeremiah 20:10, “All my familiars watched for my halting, peradventure he will be enticed.” Let us watch, say they, we may have a matter against him. The devil is a spy, that lieth upon the catch that he may frame an accusation against you before God,... some evil gesture and practice, whereof to accuse us; so his instruments watch to defame you in the world. But now Jesus Christ looketh after matter of praise and commendation. “Now we know verily, and believe;” and Christ presently telleth His Father of it. Oh! What an encouragement should this be to press us to grow in knowledge, and to abound in every good work! You furnish your intercessor (Christ) with matter of praise, and give your advocate and advantage against your accuser. Christ watcheth for a good action as the devil doth for a bad. He is a swift witness, not only against His adversaries, but for His people: Malachi 3:5, “I will come near to you in judgment, and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers”... And the godly have a witness in heaven too. So Job 16:20, “Behold, my witness is in heaven, and my reward is on high.” And He is a swift witness; we reap the fruit of many actions as soon as they are performed. A continual experience we have of this disposition of Christ in the speedy answer of prayers: Isaiah 64:24, “And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.” He is more ready to answer than we are to crave... Certainly God delighteth in the graces of His children, when He doth so readily notice of the first act and exercise of them.³

If you are a Christian, because of your faith in God His Father and your faith in Him, He is not ashamed to own you. He is proud to boast that you belong to Him.

¹¹For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason ***He is not ashamed to call them brethren***, ¹²saying:

“I will declare Your name to My brethren;
In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.”

¹³And again:

² J. C. Ryle, **Expository Thoughts on John**, vol. 3 (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987, orig. 1869), p. 203.

³ Thomas Manton, **The Complete Works of Thomas Manton**, vol. X (Solid Ground Christian Books, 2008), p. 238.

“I will put My trust in Him.”

And again:

“Here am I and the children whom God has given Me.” (Heb. 2:11-13)

B. The content of Jesus’ prayer on behalf of His disciples/apostles (17:9-26)

In verses 6 through 8 Jesus brought before His Father His disciples, commending them for their receptivity of Him, their understanding and responsiveness to His Word, and their faith in Him and in His Father. These were reasons our Lord set before His Father so that He would be disposed to show them favor, to answer the prayer of Jesus on their behalf. And then here in verse 9 Jesus became direct and specific in prayer to His Father on their behalf.

Here the Lord Jesus first specified to His Father for whom He was praying. Jesus declared in **verse 9**, “*I pray for them.*” Jesus in His high priestly prayer prayed for His own. They belonged to Him for the Father had given them to Him. But Jesus also made it clear for whom He was not praying. He declared “*I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours.*” Take note of this, “there is a world of people that Jesus Christ did not pray for” (Matthew Henry).

He prays only for His disciples (apostles) at this juncture. He is praying for them for He is concerned for them and for the glory to the Father that they would bring to Him. But He prayed for them for He also knew that His Father also had great concern for their care and well-being; after all, they had belonged to the Father who had then given them unto His Son for Him to be their Savior. But He stated forthrightly that He was not praying for “the world.” Here the “world” would be the non-elect, those whom the Father had passed over purposing to leave them in their sin to their just condemnation. The Father had not chosen them and had not given them to His Son.

Now we cannot pray in identical ways to our Father as did the Lord Jesus. We are not as He is, knowing from the beginning who were His and who were not His. Just as God has a general benevolence for all humanity, so should we. We should pray for all everywhere, but our special concern and attention should be for the elect of God. How does this look on our part? We may pray for all indiscriminately as did our Lord from His cross: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” But ultimately our prayers are directed to the Father on behalf of the elect. We are to pray for this one or that one that the Father would be gracious to save him or her from sin. But at the same time we may pray generally that God may conquer and destroy His enemies.

And so, when Jesus declared overtly to His Father, “*I pray not for the world*”, He was speaking of

“the inhabitants of it, the carnal unbelieving part of the world, which lie in sin, and will be condemned; as He died not for them, so He prayed not for them; for whom He is the propitiation, He is an advocate; and for whom He died, He makes intercession; and for no other in a spiritual saving way” (John Gill).

The words of verse 9 that Jesus prays may be paraphrased in this way:

“I pray for none but those which Thou hast given Me;” not for obstinate persecutors and perverse rebels, but for Thine own, Thy charge put into My hands. If I had prayed for any which belong not to the purpose of Thy grace, Thou mightest deny Me; but “I pray not for the world, but for Thine.”⁴

Now, we offer Christ sincerely to all people everywhere indiscriminately. Any sinner anywhere at any time may be saved through repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ. But only those who believe will be saved. And people believe savingly only through God’s grace, which He bestows upon His elect, which He does because His Son has prayed on their behalf. And so, here in verse 9 Jesus declared that He was not

⁴ Thomas Manton, **The Complete Works of Thomas Manton**, vol. X (Solid Ground Christian Books, 2008), p. 241.

praying for the non-elect of the fallen world. Later, however, we will read of Jesus praying for the elect out of the fallen world. In John 17:20 and 21:

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; ²¹that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

Here we read that He prays for all those who would come to faith through the witness (preaching and writing) of the apostles. Here we see ourselves as believers to be the subjects of our Lord’s praying. And so, we read of Jesus praying for His apostles and He prayed for all true believers who would come to faith through their apostolic witness.⁵

In our Lord’s high priestly prayer, we read of His elect distinguished from the fallen world. His elect were the ones chosen by God the Father to be recipients of God’s love and gracious dealings. **True believers are the objects of Christ’s mercy and grace.** In distinction to the world (i.e. the mass of fallen humanity), these believers are set aside for blessing in several aspects here in John 17:

a. They are given eternal life (17:2). While our Lord achieved supreme power “over all flesh” in His work, He does not grant eternal life to all. Only those previously marked out in the election receive salvation. This is a ministry limited to the chosen ones. There is a discriminatory grace.

b. They are the objects of His intercession (17:4). It will be noticed that He says, “I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given me.” Here is a selected group and a limited ministry. It goes no wider than to those who have been individually and specifically chosen in election.

c. They are divinely kept (17:11, 12). Worldlings, in the guise of believers, are not kept from falling. Such was Judas, and he is lost. Here again is a limited, but effectual ministry of the Lord. Only His own are kept from falling.

d. They will be with Him in glory (17:24). Those who have been given to Christ by the Father will behold His glory in heaven. This is guaranteed. The mere professor, however, has no such “blessed hope.” This is, once more, a limited ministry of Christ, extended only to the elect. The non-elect will not see His glory, except in judgment.

How does the Word of God describe the divine election people unto salvation? Here is a definition that is consistent with the teaching of the Bible:

God has chosen specific persons from fallen humanity to be recipients of His salvation, having chosen them before creation in Christ, not based on any foreseen condition or response of them, but solely due to His own good pleasure according to the purpose of His will.

Several words of clarification may be helpful. First, election follows the understanding of man’s total depravity, or total inability to come to God. Left on his own, even after having been instructed, admonished, persuaded, and pleaded with, man would still choose to reject God’s rule over him, for he is spiritually dead, both incapable and unwilling to do the things God has commanded him. Man’s salvation must originate from outside of himself. It originates in God’s election. God then takes action within history to save the ones that He chose to save.

Second, there is no indication in the Scriptures of a reason that God chose the ones He chose, passing over the others, other than it was good in His sight and it was in accord with His purpose to glorify Himself in His grace. He chose them, purposing to love them with an everlasting love.

⁵ Of course the heart of the apostolic witness is the New Testament Scriptures that God has given us through them.

Third, election is unto salvation. Although certainly God's election of some means His passing over others, hence, a doctrine of reprobation, nevertheless, election is always presented positively in the Scriptures unto salvation. Persons are not elected to damnation; persons are elected unto salvation.

The First Baptist Confession of 1644/46 sets forth this subject of God's election.

We affirm, that as Jesus Christ never intended to give remission of sins and eternal life unto any but His sheep (John 10:15; 17:2; Eph. 5:25, 26, 27; Rev. 5:9); so these sheep only have their sins washed away in the blood of Christ: The vessels of wrath, as they are none of Christ's sheep, nor ever believe in Him, so they have not the blood of Christ sprinkled upon them, neither are partakers of Him: And therefore have all their sins remaining upon them, and are not saved by Christ from any of them under any consideration whatsoever; but must lie under the intolerable burden of them eternally. The truth of this appears unto us by the light of these Scriptures compared together, Hebrews 12:24; 1 Peter 1:2; Hebrews 3:14; Matthew 7:23; Ephesians 5:6; 2 Timothy 1:9; John 8:24. (First London Confession of Faith with an appendix by Benjamin Cox, 1646.)

Here is the statement of the **New Hampshire Baptist Confession** of 1833. It was drafted by the Baptist churches here in New England in order to counter and correct the errors of Arminianism encroaching in the churches. It stated the matter in its article entitled, *Of God's Purpose of Grace*:

We believe that Election is the eternal purpose of God, according to which He graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners; that being perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, it comprehends all the means in connection with the end; that it is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being infinitely free, wise, holy, and unchangeable; that it utterly excludes boasting, and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active imitation of His free mercy; that it encourages the use of means in the highest degree; that it may be ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the gospel; that it is the foundation of Christian assurance; and that to ascertain it with regard to ourselves demands and deserves the utmost diligence.

Fourth, to be precise in our speaking of these matters of God's election, we should distinguish between the doctrines of election and predestination. Although they are often popularly used synonymously, they are related, but distinct doctrines. Predestination speaks of God's design for the ones He elected. He first elected those He purposed to love and save. They only are His "beloved", as no one else is, although He is loving to all because He is a loving God. He then predestined His elect that they would become conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29), to become His adopted sons (Eph. 1:5), and that they would be to the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:11).

There are many passages of Scripture that declare this doctrine of election. Here are a few of them:

Romans 9:9-15. "For this is a word of promise, according to this season will I come, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only so; but Rebecca also having conceived by one, even by our father Isaac, for the children being not yet born, *neither having done anything good or bad*, that *the purpose of God according to election* might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. Even as it is written, Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For He said to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

Ephesians 1:4. "Even as *He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love."

2 Timothy 1:9. "Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but *according to his own purpose and grace*, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began..."

Acts 13:48. "And as the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of God: and *as many as were ordained to eternal life* believed."

1 Corinthians 1:26-29. “For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. ²⁷But *God has chosen* (elected) the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and *God has chosen (elected)* the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; ²⁸and the base things of the world and the things which are despised *God has chosen (elected)*, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, ²⁹that no flesh should glory in His presence.

Only the elect of God will believe, for God only works His grace in them so as to regenerate them—giving them spiritual life. This new birth places within them the desire and ability to believe God’s Word so as to believe on God’s Son, so as to be saved by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone for salvation. Christians owe all that they have from God to His sovereign grace that He had purposed to bestow upon them from eternity. If it were not for the reality that God had chosen (elected) us unto salvation, we would have been as all others, remaining in our sin destined for our just condemnation.

If you are a Christian, you are so due to God’s work of grace on your behalf. He overcame your ignorance, your indifference, even insolence, your unbelief and your resistance to His rule. You were unqualified to enter His presence to be received by Him. But He set out to qualify you to share in what He has promised to all of His people. You will inherit all things for He has enabled you to be in the place and position to receive His blessing.

And the only reason that you are here today and not someone else in your place, is because, if you are in Christ, He set His heart upon you in eternity. He had decreed that He would bestow His everlasting blessing upon you and not on someone else other than you. He passed by a multitude of others, but He did not pass you by. You were on His heart. He is solely responsible for your salvation; therefore you should give thanks continually to Him for His kindness and mercy that He has lavishly bestowed upon you. Not one of us fully realizes the extent of His kindness and blessing to us. Some of us may know more than others, but none of us knows very extensively how great His love is toward us. But we read in the Scriptures that through eternity our God will continue to be revealing the nature and extent of His kindness toward us. Paul wrote in **Ephesians 2:4ff** these words:

⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷*that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.* (Eph. 2:4-7)

And so, to the degree that you realize your indebtedness to God’s sovereign grace, and you therefore render unto Him due thanksgiving for what He has so freely given you, this is pleasing to God.

Now the Lord Jesus prayed for His apostles, but by legitimate extension, we can say that He prays similarly for all His elect. But He did not pray for the “world” of the non-elect. He was sovereign, of course, knowing who and who not was among the ones the Father had given Him. But we are not sovereign, knowing with certainty for whom to pray for and for whom if we were to pray, the Father would not hear us. But we should not assume this is the case in an absolute sense, for our God commonly stirs up or burdens His people to pray for those whom He fully intends to bless. For some, then, it would seem that we have no deep burden or sense of compulsion to pray for them, but for others the Lord places upon us great concern that shows forth in our praying on their behalf. **Thomas Manton** addressed this matter:

We feel sometimes a restraint upon our prayers. God by oracle forbade the prophet to pray for the people: Jeremiah 7:16, “Therefore pray not for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to Me, for I will not hear thee.” When He was resolved to put His wrath into execution, He would not have His people’s prayers lost; and still the same spirit stirreth up to prayer searcheth out the deep counsels of God. So that there is a kind of prophetic light in prayers; God suspendeth the fervency and actual assistance, by which we carried on at other times. I would not justify every private

passionate conceit⁶, but yet we must look upon the Spirit of God as the interpreter of God's counsel, and that He will not stir up prayers to no purpose. Yea, sometimes we feel that, after much striving, we have no heart to pray for them, which is a very great mark of God's displeasure upon any person, when God's people, yea, even after much struggling with themselves, have no heart to pray for him.⁷

By the way, if you would like to read a biography that illustrates this subjective element in praying for others, you might read the book, *George Mueller of Bristol*. I would recommend the biography written by **Arthur T. Pierson**.

We next read our Lord's words in **John 17:10**, "*And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them.*" The first two statements reveal to us the equality of the Persons of the Father and the Son in the godhead. All who belong to the Lord Jesus at the same time belong to God the Father. There is an equality of possession of the people of God to the Father and the Son (and to the Holy Spirit).

Now in what sense do the elect belong to the Son and to the Father? First consider that the Scriptures declare that *all human beings* belong to God. In Ezekiel 16:4 God declares, "All souls are Mine." But the way the Lord Jesus expressed these words of John 17:10, it is too broad to speak of all humanity. Elsewhere in the Scriptures we read that *all creatures*, animals as well as humans, belong to God. Psalm 1:10 declares, "For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills." But here in verse 10 those who are God's are fewer, the range of persons is narrower, in that it refers to His elect, those He has on His heart belong to Him. Paul wrote,

"Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: '*The Lord knows those who are His,*' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.'" (2 Tim. 2:19)

But there is a slight distinction in the relationship between God the Father and His people and between Jesus Christ and the same people. When Jesus said to His Father, "*And all Mine are Yours*", He was referring to the truth that they were the Father's through His election of them. When Jesus declared, "*and Yours are Mine*", He was owning them as His through His redemption of them. All the elect of the Father were going to benefit from the redemption by the Son. And all that the Son redeemed, belonged to the Father; they were His chosen ones. And, of course, all of the elect who are redeemed by the Son are also sanctified or set apart by the Holy Spirit. It reads this way in 1 Peter 1:1 and 2:

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ²*elect* according to the foreknowledge of *God the Father*, in *sanctification of the Spirit*, for obedience and *sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*: Grace to you and peace be multiplied. (1 Pet. 1:1 NKJ)

We may know that as the elect of God we have God for us, He is for our eternal good. The Father was the one offended due to our sin of rebellion and defiance, but He has been reconciled to us and we to Him by the death of His Son. We have Christ as the closet of relation with the Father, as the One who has redeemed us. We are closer to Jesus Christ than are angels, for we are one with Him, being in union with Him. He is one of us and we are in Him. We are even members of His body, which cannot be severed or separated from Him. We are forever secure in Him.

Jesus declared to His Father, "*and I am glorified in them.*" God the Father honors His Son, and we as His people, also glorify Christ. This is what we are called to do. This is one of the clearest indicators that you belong to Him, that you are a Christian, because your great desire and effort is to glorify Him who died for you. You have already glorified Him by believing Him for who He is and for what He did. You glorify Him by acknowledging Him now as your Lord. You glorify Him in your resolve and commitment to cleave unto Him regardless of the cost or consequence for doing so. You glorify Him in believing His words and when you use His name when you call upon the Father in prayer. You glorify Him in living a holy life before the

⁶ i.e. every private perception of God's will to pray or not to pray for someone

⁷ Manton, vol. 10, p. 252.

world. You are the closest and the clearest view of Christ that some will ever see. We are to do more than just live a moral life; we are to live a Christian life, living for Him, before Him, and living with Him before others. It should be our great desire and purpose in life to live for Him. “For me to live is Christ” (Phi. 1:21).

We then read in **verse 11**, “*Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.*” Our Lord had given reasons to His Father why He should pray for His people, and here we begin to read of His specific requests on their behalf. Jesus speaks as though His trials and death were past, that He had already left this world. He was concerned that He was leaving behind in this wicked world His disciples, whom He loved and in whom He had invested all of His effort to teach and train. He prayed for their safety and security. Jesus declared that He would no longer be with them in person to guide and preserve them. He was going to the Father. He therefore prayed that the Father would keep them in faith and fellowship with Himself. He did not pray for their outward comfort, for wealth and health, or for ease and success in all their endeavors. Rather, Jesus prayed for their spiritual well-being. He prayed that the Father would keep them from sin, and keep them in a fruitful state, and bring them safely one day to enter into the presence of God.

He left us in the world, but He prayed for us that we would be preserved and protected from the fallen world. Here the word “world” refers to sphere of sin in which the people of the earth move and live and have their being.

The nature of the petition is denoted by the address, *Holy Father*. The holiness of God marks His separation from the unbelief and wickedness of the world, which lies in the power of the devil (1 John 5:19). It is precisely this holiness that marks the true disciples of Jesus, who are in the world but not of it, and which provides the ground of their unity. Hitherto their unity and their distinction from the world had been preserved by the bodily presence of Jesus on earth. “He brooded them under His wings as a hen doth her chickens; but now, when He departeth He prayed to His Father to cover them with His safeguard.”⁸

Jesus asked His Father to preserve them so that “*that they may be one as We are.*” What does this mean? There have been fanciful interpretations placed on this clause and on a few like it in this passage. Those who have historically promoted the ecumenical movement of the coming together of all churches into one world-wide denomination declared that this reveals that God wills to have all Christians and churches everywhere to be in an organizational unity: all are to “be as one.” And then there have been those who have claimed that Jesus was revealing that Christians will one day be made to be one in essence with the godhead. This is a strange teaching but cults have commonly made this kind of claim. What was Jesus asking of His Father? He desired that His Father would guard His disciples and enable them to stand as one with the Father and Son against the evil world in which they are dwelling. The point that He is making is not that they become one, but that they might remain “one”, that is, remaining in unity with one another and in their purpose and effort to be true to their calling. Here are the words of **J. C. Ryle** (1816-1900):

Here our Lord mentions one special object for which He desires that His disciples be kept: viz., their unity: that they may be one. --“Keep them, that they may be of one heart and one mind, striving together against common foes and for common ends, and not broken up, weakened and paralyzed by internal quarrels and divisions.”

He adds the highest model and pattern of unity, --“one, as we are,”—the unity of the Father and the Son. Of course there cannot be literally such unity between Christian and Christian, as there is between two Persons in the Trinity. But the unity of which Jesus prays the disciples aim at should be a close, intimate, unbroken unity of mind, and will, and opinion, and feeling.

It was particularly important that these 11 apostles, soon to be 12 once again, to be in close union with one another, thinking and moving as one as the together led the people of the Lord in the formation of reconstituted Israel--the church, and as they superintended its early expansion into the world. Jesus asked His

⁸ Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, **The Fourth Gospel** (Faber and Faber Limited, 1947), p. 500.

Father to assure that they would live and serve with one another for the purpose for which the Lord had called them.

Jesus then stated to His Father in prayer in **verse 12**, “*While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.*” The Lord declared what He had done for His disciples while they had been with Him during His ministry. He had kept them in His Father’s name. In other words, Jesus had kept them because they had belonged to the Father. The Father had given them to His Son and had entrusted them to Him. Jesus had been wholly faithful and successful in guarding and preserving them from defection and departure from Him and His Father. The one exception was Judas Iscariot, but the reason that he was lost to Jesus was because He was it had been decreed and had been declared in the Holy Scriptures that He would be damned.

Judas is referred to as “the son of perdition.” Perdition is another word for the state of damnation, or to hell, the place of punishment of the damned. The Scripture to which Jesus referred is probably Psalm 41:9. Here is the immediate context of this verse:

All who hate me whisper together against me;
Against me they devise my hurt.
⁸“An evil disease,” they say, “clings to him.
And now that he lies down, he will rise up no more.”
⁹Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted,
Who ate my bread,
Has lifted up his heel against me. (Psa. 41:7-9)

Others have said that the Scripture fulfilled should be understood as Psalm 109:6-8, which reads, “

Set a wicked man over him,
And let an accuser stand at his right hand.
⁷When he is judged, let him be found guilty,
And let his prayer become sin.
⁸Let his days be few,
And let another take his office.

Judas defected and departed so that “the Scripture might be fulfilled.” This is not to say that Judas was not responsible for his own evil intentions and actions, as if he were simply a passive pawn in God’s sovereign working out His purposes in history. This is how **F. F. Bruce** (1910-1990) addressed this matter:

Despite the predestinarian flavour of the language, Judas was not lost against his will but with his consent. He might have responded to Jesus’ last appeal to him in His gesture of fellowship at the supper table, but he chose to respond instead to the great adversary. Jesus has no responsibility for Judas’ final decision. Judas, like the other disciples, had been given by the Father to the Son, but even among those so given apostasy is a solemn possibility.⁹

May the Lord preserve us unto His heavenly kingdom as He has promised to do for those who have come to God through Him. May we rest confidently that He has promised He would do so and let us be assured that this will come to pass.

And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom.
To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen! (2 Tim. 4:18)

⁹ F. F. Bruce, **The Gospel of John** (William B. Eerdmans, 1983), p. 332.

