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What Jesus Prays For – Our Protection

John 17:9-15

Pastor Ty Blackburn

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Amen. Please turn with me in your Bibles to John 17. We are continuing to look at a marvelous prayer of Jesus that was offered the night before the crucifixion. It is often called ‘The High Priestly Prayer of Jesus’. So we’ve looked at this prayer, we have considered it, and observed it by asking some question. We began a few weeks back looking at *When Jesus prays*, the night before He is crucified, *Where?* and *Why?* And last week we looked at the question *Who?* or *Whom? For whom does Jesus pray?* We noted for those the Father has given Him—the elect.

Today we want to ask another of those W questions, and that is the question *What? What does Jesus pray for?* I know technically, *For what does Jesus pray?* is the way to say it, grammatically. It just doesn’t seem to work colloquially, does it? *For what does Jesus pray?* Maybe it does for you, but I’m going to say *What does Jesus pray for?* And that is the title of the message—‘What does Jesus pray for?’ And this will be the title for a couple of weeks, maybe three, or four, but today we’re going to look at one item that Jesus prays for. What does He pray for?

He prays for several things in the passage, in the prayer. He is praying for His elect, the ones whom the Father has given to Him, but He prays certain things for them. What we’re going to see today, the title of the message this morning is: ‘What Jesus Prays For – Our Protection’. He prays that we would be protected, that the disciples that are before Him, the followers that are following Him at the moment that He prays, and for, we saw last time, all those who will believe through their testimony. He is praying for them, He is praying for us, He prays for their protection.

We’re going to see that a key word is the word ‘*keep*’ that occurs three times in the passage. The idea of this word is ‘*to keep the eyes fixed upon, to observe attentively, thus to keep, to guard*’. The idea is there is a real and serious threat, there is clear and present danger, there is imminent threats to the well-being of the people of God, to those for whom He prays. So He prays for their protection, for our protection. This is something that I think is really elusive for us for a number of reasons. One is that in reformed theology, which we talked specifically about last time when we talked about the extent of the atonement, particular redemption,

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which we saw last time. For whom Jesus prays, as He gets ready to offer His sacrifice. Well we believe in the sovereignty of God, that He is absolutely sovereign over those who are saved, and that salvation is His work from first to last. That Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. That when He begins a good work in it, He will complete it to the day of Christ Jesus. There are a number of Scriptures that make clear the Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints. That those who truly believe, now the adverb *'truly'* is very important, those who *truly* believe will persevere to the end. It doesn't mean that everyone who has a religious experience will persevere to the end. It doesn't mean that everyone who has a spiritual, they believe a spiritual transformational experience even, they feel like it is that way, so much emotion. That doesn't mean they are going to persevere to the end because those that will persevere are those who have been savingly called by the Spirit of God. Those who have experienced true salvation, will, and we say perseverance of the saints. Sometimes you will hear people say it should be the preservation of the saints.

Remember the TULIP, an acronym I gave you last week? Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, P—Perseverance of the Saints. Some people say, well preservation of the saints. Well, you could argue for that, but I think perseverance is the best description of what the Bible describes in this doctrine, this biblical doctrine. That is the idea that the one who has truly been saved will persevere in faith. Now he perseveres in faith because God is keeping him, and preserving him, yes, but the message to us is persevere.

Well, when you have this confidence in the sovereignty of God, it makes it easy to take your foot off the accelerator, and to coast in the Christian life, and to think, "I don't really need to be protected. I'm really not in that much danger. I mean, He has got me in His hand, why do I need to pray?" He does have you in His hand, but we're going to see that because He has you in His hand, you must pray for Him to protect you. Now, the good news is, even when we don't pray, the Spirit is praying, and Jesus is praying for us, always interceding for us. You can't cause yourself to be unsaved if you are saved. You cannot be lost.

But the balance, we are to interpret, we have to always watch out for, and I shared this last time, our reason is our biggest problem. I say it because we, as fallen men, we reason, and make inferences that are not proper. If God is sovereign, why pray? That is actually a reasonable inference to a human being. If He is really sovereign, what difference does it make? If He already knows what I am going to say, why do I even need to say it? You already know." Your prayer time could be like that. It's

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time to pray. “Lord, You already know everything that is on my heart. You already know everything that I would say. So thank You for already knowing that.” And doesn’t that seem reasonable, really? It may seem reasonable to us, but it is wrong because God says we need to pray. Men ought always to pray and not to faint. Pray without ceasing. Pray and never stop praying, 1 Thessalonians 5. Luke 18:1 says that men ought always to pray and not to lose heart. And this idea of protection, we don’t think we need protection.

I think it is not just because we are reformed in theology, I think it is also because we are Americans. We have a sense of invulnerability, and it is not just this modern society, but it is also being Americans. You know, we are blessed by being protected on both sides by oceans, on the north by Canada, and the south by Mexico. They haven’t been real threats to us through the years, Mexico or Canada. Anyway, I don’t mean to get off on that. That is not edifying or profitable. The Lord has blessed us immensely as a nation. We have been free from the threat of invasion, except about worrying about it a little bit in World War II, basically we feel very safe. Now obviously that has changed in recent years because terrorism has become a reality, and we began to experience what the rest of the world feels like, but it really just started in the 1990s, the rest of them have been dealing with it for decades and decades before it ever came home to us.

Even if you live in a world where you feel like you need to be protected on a daily basis from the threats of hunger, or from the threat of wild animals, it changes the way you see protection. You see you need it every day. We don’t have those things. We don’t feel the danger of starving to death, starvation. We don’t feel the danger of walking across the yard, you are not worried about the fact you are going to be attacked by a wild animal. I say that, it seems so foreign for us. That is one of the things I think is ironic. I heard a guy interviewed in Zimbabwe. Remember, I’d mentioned Cecil the Lion a few weeks ago, and I didn’t explain that. Most of you probably have heard about that, the lion that was shot by the hunter from Minnesota. Apparently, possibly it was illegal. The question is, how much he knew about it and all that, and an uproar, an outrage over this lion that is shot—Cecil. He had a name.

I heard somebody talking the other day on the radio about there is an animal psychic who had a message from Cecil to the rest of the world. It was reported in the UK Daily Mail, one of the newspapers in the United Kingdom, and I am sure there are people who listened to that, and really heeded that. Isn’t that astonishing? So wanting to hear some message, somebody who would do that is because they

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denied this. Everybody needs to hear from a higher power. We need to hear from the one true God, and when you turn away from Him, you'll listen to anything.

But anyway, Cecil the Lion was shot, and back to the interview, they were talking to a man in Zimbabwe, and he made this statement. He said, "It is surprising how Americans get all, hundreds of thousands just writing letters and all of that when a lion is killed, what about when people are killed by lions? It happens in Zimbabwe all the time. No outrage." I mean in reality, I think we are pretty smug and ridiculous to want them to keep all the lions so that we can watch them on documentaries, when they have to live with the reality of it every day. We killed off all of our lions because that's what civilized people do actually. I'm sorry I'm going off into an animal rights thing. This wasn't really, this much wasn't in my notes. But it just shows how wrong-headed we are, how ridiculous.

I mean, the guy shouldn't have shot a lion that wasn't supposed to be shot, of course, it is something wrong. But the point is, there are people who have throughout history lived with the threat of attack. They had to be watching as they were walking to go get water, "Are there any lions around?" Or in Africa, "Are there any crocodiles that are going to come up and eat me when I'm trying to get my water?" If you live in a world like that, you are thinking about protection and safety all of the time. When you live in a world like ours, it is easy not to think about it so much, and I think that bleeds over into the spiritual realm because in reality the Scripture makes very clear that we live in a danger zone, that we need protection all the time. That if we are not protected we are incredibly vulnerable. Look with me at John 17. We are going to read the entire chapter. We're going to focus on Verses 9-15, what Jesus prays for, our protection.

John 17:1-26 ~ Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, 2 even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. 3 This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. 4 I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. 5 Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. 6 "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.

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7 Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; 8 for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. 9 I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; 10 and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11 I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. 12 While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

13 But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. 14 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

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

22 The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. 24 Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. 25 “O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; 26 and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

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Let's pray together.

Father, we thank You for Your precious word, and we ask now that Your Spirit might open the eyes of our hearts. That You might send forth Your light, and Your truth, and You might let them lead us to Your holy hill, to the place of Your habitation. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

'What Jesus Prays For – Our Protection', key word in the passage is the word 'keep'. It occurs three times, the beginning of Verse 11, when Jesus finally says what in Verse 9 He says, "I ask on their behalf, I don't ask on behalf of the world." But what does He ask? He finally gets to the request actually in Verse 11 when He says, "Holy Father, keep them in Your name." This is His first request for His people. "Keep them in Your name." I said earlier, the word 'keep' means 'to keep your eyes fixed upon, to observe attentively, thus to guard', but He says the same thing in Verse 12. Or He actually says, "I want You to keep them," in Verse 11. Look at Verse 12, "While I was with them, I was *keeping* them in Your name." The same verb. And then Verse 15, the same verb again, "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to *keep* them from the evil one." So three times that verb 'keep', and also there is another verb in the passage, translated with the word 'guard' in Verse 12, "And I *guarded* them, and not one of them perished."

A different word which means 'to be sleepless'. The idea is 'to keep watch into the night, to keep your eyes from sleeping so that you can stay vigilant'. So these three times the word 'keep', and once the word 'guard', the idea is Jesus sees the reality of danger. I said we don't feel the reality of the danger, and we don't see it, but it is very real. The spiritual danger was so real that Jesus prayed about it the night before He was crucified. The urgency in His voice, "Father *keep* them. I was keeping them, I guarded them. Keep them from the evil one." The idea of keeping, and guarding for me, reminds me of, and as you look at John, of Jesus' metaphor that He uses, particularly in John 10, of the shepherd and the sheep. Sheep need to be kept, and one of the things that we see in this passage is, if you are a Christian, you need to be kept. We need keeping, we need guarding. Just like sheep need keeping and sheep need guarding. And we need to pray for keeping and guarding, we need to pray that we are protected.

How often have you prayed for the spiritual protection of the Lord in your life? Or in the lives of those that you love? This is where we show how much we take for granted. Think about the last two requests in the Lord's Prayer. Jesus taught us to pray this way, *Our Father, which art in Heaven...* What are the last two requests?

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Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. He says, “Pray regularly that God would lead you not into temptation.” “Father, keep me from temptation today.” That should be what we pray. And when it happens, “Deliver me from evil.” We should be continually praying for our protection. This is where we see again the balancing truths of Scripture. Though God is sovereign, though He is keeping us, He wants us to ask Him to keep us. This is again where we think, “You already know. You know You need to keep me. You know I’m a sheep more than I know that I’m a sheep. Just do what You know to do.” Well, the Lord wants a relationship with us, and so He, though He is sovereign, and He governs the world according to His purposes, the Doctrine of Providence, which our church is named, the Doctrine of Providence is that God has foreordained all things, whatsoever comes to pass. Every single thing that happens God has foreordained.

The Bible teaches it. If you want to read your Bible carefully, you can’t avoid it. There are a lot of people who do avoid it because they don’t like the implications of it. It is hard to understand why God allows certain things to happen, but the Bible is very clear about it. Look at Daniel 4, just read through Isaiah. He has declared the end from the beginning, He has declared the number of the days of your life before there is yet one of them. “What can you do to add to your life?” Jesus said in Matthew 6. Worrying, you can’t lengthen your days. God has already set the bounds. He is that sovereign, but the Lord had ordained means. He has called us, one of the ways He keeps you is by commanding you, even though it seems counterintuitive, it is actually, again, the problems is with us. When the Lord doesn’t make sense to us, it is because we don’t make sense.

I mean, we are sheep. Sheep are what? They are dumb. We are dumb. We don’t know that we need to be protected. You know I think sheep don’t think they need to be protected either. I’ve shared before, I did some research on sheep years back when I was doing a series on Elders and shepherding. We are all sheep, and the wonder of it is God makes some of the sheep under-shepherds. That is a scary thought, but what He calls you to do, He empowers you to do, as you trust in Him. But in doing this study on sheep, I read some stuff from the University of Tennessee in the Agriculture Department. It was astonishing because they are talking just completely scientifically, and from the standpoint of functional, utilitarian approach. What do you need to do to take care of sheep? And they said things like this: You need to regularly feel of the sheep’s belly because the sheep, because they have wool, you can’t tell if they are eating or not. You need to regularly feel and see, “Do they feel healthy?” Because if they don’t, what you know is, you need to make sure that sheep eats.

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Now think about how dumb that is. You are feeding the sheep, you've got all kinds of food out for the sheep to eat, but that is not enough. You've got to feel of their stomachs regularly to make sure they are actually eating, and if they are not eating, then you've got to make them eat. The sheep is in there thinking, "My stomach is growling. What do I need to do? Man! "Eat!" right? And we are like sheep because what do we need? We need the word of God. Man does not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. And how often do we eat? And then our lives are a mess, we're having stomach pains spiritually, and we don't eat. We're sheep. Well sheep also don't know they need to be protected. They can't protect themselves, they are defenseless. It is hard to find or imagine a more defenseless animal than the sheep. They need to be protected. They don't see the danger. We don't see the danger.

So what I want us to do is see that Jesus, in this passage, says that we need protection, and I think there are three things that we can learn from this passage, three things that we should do. We need to first of all *Run from the Danger*, that's the first point. The second point is we need to *Remain in the Shelter*. And thirdly, we need to *Reach Up to Our Father*. We need to pray, but it is *Run from the Danger, Remain in the Shelter, Reach Up to Your Father*.

1) Run from the Danger:

The first thing, to run from the danger you have to see the danger, and God's word helps us to see the danger, the deadliness of the danger even. The need to be kept, the need to be guarded. Now look at Verse 12 of John 17, and look with me at this carefully, and consider what He says.

John 17:12 ~ While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

What was Jesus guarding them and keeping them from? His vigilant guarding and keeping them kept them from perishing, and now He is asking the Father to keep them from perishing. To keep them from being lost He is asking the Father to do that. Now understand, I think the Gospel of John itself teaches eternal security, and the whole Bible does. But Scripture interprets Scripture and sometimes we take things too far, and we become complacent. Once you are saved, once you are truly saved, you are always saved, but you are never to presume upon it, and one of the marks of the true believer is He will respond to the exhortations that God gives, not

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to be presumptuous, but to keep clinging to God. Let me show you some of these balancing truths though so we can put it, and set it in context, because we always need to interpret the Scripture in context. Look at John 6:37-39:

John 6:37-39 ~ All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. 39 This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

This is the will of the Father, so we can count on the fact that Jesus is going to do the Father's will. That is the wonderful teaching of that verse. He is going to do His Father's will, He's not going to lose me, He's not going to lose you if you belong to Him. There are times where you need to reflect on that, and celebrate that. I mean, you need to always have that as an undergirding confidence because it really is what undergirds your ability to reach out to hold on to Him. The reason you are able to reach out to hold on to Him, and say, "Lord, hold on to me," is because you know He is holding on to you. Even if you stop holding on to Him, He doesn't stop holding on to you, but the message is: Don't stop holding on to Him. Look at Chapter 10:27.

John 10:27-28 ~ My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand.

Now I love that, ...***no one will snatch them out of My hand.*** All hell could come against you, all hell, the whole world cannot snatch you out of Jesus' hand. He said, ...***no one will snatch them out of My hand.***, Verse 28.

John 10:29 ~ My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

"If somebody thought they could snatch them out of My hand, they can't snatch them out of the Father's hand." You are in the Lord Jesus' hand, and you are in the Father's hand. You cannot be snatched out, and Scripture makes this abundantly clear other places, the eternal security of the believer.

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But one of the reasons that some of our brethren struggle with the issue about they think we can lose our genuine salvation is because they see verses that seem to, given by themselves, imply that. John 17, this actually is one of those places. There are other places where the balancing truth of Scripture is, and what is really happening is, God is saying, “Listen, once you truly belong to Him, nothing can change that. He will finish the work He has begun in you. But one of the ways that He continues to hold on to you is by giving you instructions which are, “Keep holding on to Me.” An illustration I have used before is you know, we went to the Grand Canyon some years back, and Maggie was maybe 4 years old, I think, at the time. So Jon was like 13, so I wasn’t worried about Jon. I knew he knew what he was doing, but I was keeping her close to me. You know if you’ve been to the Grand Canyon, it is an awesome thing. I mean, you walk up and it is just sort of like, it is truly breathtaking. We use that word sometimes lightly, but the Grand Canyon is breathtaking. It is amazing! So vast, and one of the things that I was noticing, as we were walking up to the edge of the Grand Canyon is, “These fences and these barriers do not seem sufficient. You could slip down it and that it looks like, and boy if you did, I don’t think that would be good.”

So what did I do? I held Maggie’s hand, and also said when I had to let go of her, “Stay close to daddy.” I tried to hold onto her all the time, but I told her also the command, “Stay close to me. Don’t go away. Stay close to me or mommy,” right? So the command itself was the means by which I also kept her from falling. Do you see that? This is the balance. The Lord is determined not to lose you, but He has given you the command, “Stay close to Me.” And you, if you belong to Him, do well to heed that command, because this is the way He works. We might say that we’d like to do it a different way. It doesn’t matter what you’d like. This is what He says, and in reality it’s much better, because what you learn is, if we really thought it didn’t matter, we’d just run off and do our thing. But what we find is, when you really need protection, if you’re a sheep and you’ve got any sense, and you see that the wolves are out there, and you’re aware of the fact, what do you want to do? Stay right beside the Shepherd. And you know, that’s where joy and life are, is beside the Shepherd. And how do you stay beside the Shepherd? You’re praying. You’re staying in His presence. So the danger is deadly in that the idea that He’s communicating here is that if we’re not guarded, we could perish. But the good news is He’s determined to guard us, but we’re still to pray for that guarding. “Lord, protect me.”

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Now, the pervasiveness of the danger. Still under *Run from the Danger*, there are two sub-points, the deadliness of the danger, which I just covered, and the pervasiveness of the danger. He's talking about, you can hear in Jesus' heart how concerned He is that He's leaving them, first of all, in the world. There are three elements of this pervasive danger. The world is one of the dangers. Eighteen times in this prayer, Jesus uses the word *world, cosmos*. The world is that world system that stands in opposition to God, in opposition to Christ, in opposition to His people. I've shared before that the word has in some sense military overtones, in that *cosmeo* would be a word they would use that's where the word *cosmos* comes from. The word *cosmeo* would mean to order, to arrange, and it would be how a general would dispose or set up his battle plan, how he would arrange for battle. And so the word *cosmos* has this kind of connotation throughout John. The world is evil, in opposition to God, in opposition to His people. We saw this in chapter 15 when He said, "The world will hate you." He says the same thing here in Verse 14:

John 17:14 ~ I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

He said this first in Verse 11. Look what He says:

John 17:11 ~ I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world,...

Do you see Jesus' heart? "I'm not in the world. They're in the world. I'm coming to You. I'm leaving them."

John 17:11 ~ ...and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name...

"Keep them from the world. The world is a dangerous place. Keep them. The world system, the values of the world, keep them from the world, but also keep them from the evil one," Verse 15:

John 17:15 ~ I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.

From Satan himself and his demons. We have the daily danger of the world system and the attacks of our mortal enemy Satan and his kingdom of darkness. And his method is to deceive, to tempt, to blaspheme God, and to lead us toward unbelief,

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distrust of God. So we have a daily assault by the world system. We have a daily assault by the tempter who is tempting us continually, trying to lead us astray. We're walking through enemy territory. Or we saw in the passage we read earlier, 1 Peter 5:8, where we were told to be sober, be vigilant. Your adversary the devil is like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour. You are walking on the Serengeti. You don't have a gun. You better keep your eyes peeled. That's the import of this exhortation. And so Jesus says, "Keep them from the evil one. Protect them." He prays, and so we should pray the same way.

We not only have the world, and we not only have the evil one, but we also have sin in ourselves, sin in us. John Owen in his work in indwelling sin, makes this point powerfully, and he says, you know, you remember the story of Samson. Remember how Delilah kept trying to figure out what the source of Samson's strength was? He would tell her something false, she would do it, and like if I'm tied up with ropes that have never been used before, then I'll lose my strength. So what does she do? She ties him up with ropes that have never been used before, and then the Philistines come in. She wakes him up and says, "Samson! The Philistines are upon you." Then he keeps telling her stuff. Isn't that amazing? "It's just a coincidence, I guess, that I woke up last time with exactly what I told you."

Anyway, Owen says this. "For us, it's not just that our enemy is upon you—the world and the devil—but far greater is our peril. The enemy is not just upon you. He's within you." Sin in us is working against us, and so we need help. We live with this danger. Every day, we're surrounded, and so the idea is we ought to be running from the danger. Now, how do you run from the danger? Well, you pray, but also He gives us some more insight. We run from the danger. That's our first point. And now secondly, we remain in the shelter. The idea is to run to the shelter, but really we want to learn to remain in the shelter. So that's our second point.

2) Remain in the Shelter:

Look what He says back in John 17 when He says *keep them* in Verse 11. Keep them where?

John 17:11 ~ ...keep them in Your name...

Look at Verse 12:

John 17:12 ~ While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name...

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Where are we guarded from the evil one? We're guarded from the evil one in the shelter that is the Name of God. This recalls that verse in Proverbs 18:10.

Proverbs 18:10 ~ The name of the Lord is a strong tower; The righteous runs into it and is safe.

The Name of God, now what does this mean? The Name in Scripture, the Name of God is His character, His nature, who He is, what He's truly like. That's the Name of God. His real essential character, His true attributes. So He's saying that when you run from the danger, you're surrounded by those that would devour you, that would lead you astray, when you run from the danger, where do you run? You run into the shelter, and the shelter is the Name of God, that is, the true character of God, who He is, what He's truly like.

Now, Satan's strategy to devour us is that he tells lies about God. This has been his strategy from the beginning. This is his main mode of operation. He lies about God, and he has set the world up, because he's the ruler of this world, he's set the world up so that there's basically a worldwide propaganda campaign, and this is the message that goes out throughout the world, day after day, year after year. This is the lie: God is not good and cannot be trusted. And that is how Satan seeks to devour you. He seeks to convince us that God is not good and cannot be trusted. Our sin nature willingly affirms that same distrust. That's what we have inside of us in our sin nature, this basic distrust of God.

When you look back at Genesis 3, turn back there for a moment and look at Satan's strategy in the beginning, how he tempts us to sin. This is the temptation. Adam and Eve are living in the perfection of Eden, fellowshiping with God. We read:

Genesis 3:1 ~ Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field...

That's what Satan is like. He's crafty. He's a schemer, a deceiver.

Genesis 3:1 ~ Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?"

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His first strategy is to question God's character, and he does it right there. He says, "Hasn't God said that you can't eat from any of the trees of the garden? Isn't that what God said. He doesn't want you to eat from any of the trees of the garden, right?" Satan knew that was not true. There's only one tree in the center of garden that they were not to eat from. Every other tree is open, but Satan impugns God's character from the beginning. "This is what God is like. He is a God who withholds that which is good." He's sowing the seed of doubt. Then what does he do next?

Genesis 3:2 ~ The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'"

Satan's second attack:

Genesis 3:4 ~ The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die!"

In the most emphatic terms, he says, "God is a liar. He told you that you will die. You surely shall not die!" And then he goes on in Verse 5 to impugn God's character further. He says:

Genesis 3:5 ~ For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

"Far from killing you, God knows that when you eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will ascend and realize what your self-actualization can be. You will be like God. You see, God's not good. God can't be trusted. God is against you." Do you see that? That's the essence of the lie. "And what you do to escape that is you make yourself your own authority. You don't submit to his command. You come out from it and be your own god like me," Satan says. That's exactly what Satan did. He didn't want to be under God. He wanted to be equal with God. That's what we read in Ezekiel. He wanted to be like the Most High. He wanted to be like God. And isn't it interesting he comes to them then with the same identical temptation. "You will be like God." That's the essence of sin. So the essence of sin is to desire to be like God, and the essence of sin is also to believe that God is not good, that God can't be trusted. Every time you or I sin, we are sinning in unbelief. Every single sin you commit is basically a testimony that you are believing at that moment that God is not good.

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Say you get angry and you yell, and you know you shouldn't yell, and even as you're getting angry and you're yelling, you may be tempted like—I don't usually yell, but I get frustrated driving. I get sinfully angry. It's good to call it like it is. I get sinfully angry driving sometimes, and I'm working on this. The Lord is sanctifying me. You're thinking, "Well, you sure talk about this a lot through the years." Pray for me. Pray for me for protection. But seriously, I find myself thinking, "What's that person thinking? I can't believe that. Look at this. You've got a mile and a half of no cars coming. Why won't you get out? Are you waiting for an invitation?" It's nonsense. Well, it's sinful, and even as I'm doing it, I will realize I'm sinning. And why do I do it? Because I believe that when God says you shouldn't speak evil of someone like that, that you should impute good motives. You shouldn't judge them. You don't know what the circumstances are. Maybe it's a new driver, somebody that's just learning to drive. I'd rather that person just learning to drive, be extra careful and let that long gap happen. Wouldn't you? If you knew that, wouldn't you want that? "Okay, that's fine. Just learning to drive? Yeah, you've got to take it slow and easy." Well, I don't know what I'm talking about. Why do I do that? Because I really think I know more than I do, and I just want to be God. I want to pass judgment on that person. And the reality is the Lord put me in this place. He put me behind this driver. He's sovereign over everything. That's what Providence means. He's trying to teach me patience. I should be praying for that person, but see, I want to do what I want to do.

The same thing when a man leaves his wife or a woman leaves her husband, what is that person saying? They believe they know better than God. They believe that *God wants me to stay in this marriage. I'm unhappy. God is not good. He wants me to be unhappy.* They don't normally say that. They really believe that. They go over here and they say, "I believe God would want me to be happy," and what we should tell them is, "The god that you are worshipping might, because the god that you're worshipping is not the God of the Bible. You're worshipping an idol of your own making." God does want you to be happy biblically, but your happiness comes through holiness. Your happiness comes through submitting to Him. He says you can't divorce your spouse without biblical grounds, and you should do so so carefully and cautiously, and you should be submitted to other believers to help you, particularly your church leaders just to give you counsel. That's the way I would approach it. That's the way I would want anyone to approach it. We should be careful and humble, but we want to do our own thing. So whenever you do that, you're saying God is not good.

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When a person looks at pornography, what they're saying is that *though God has forbidden this, I want this, and it's good for me to have it. God's not good.* Every sin is unbelief. It's believing that God is not truly good. And Satan is basically lying to us continually, trying to convince us of that fact, and there is real danger. Hebrews 3, turn over to that and let me show you a passage that shows you the reality of the danger, why you need to remain in the shelter. In Hebrews 3:12, he's writing to people who are professing faith. He calls them brothers. Look what he says, though:

Hebrews 3:12 ~ Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.

He said, "All of you profess faith, but be careful that there's not in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away and perishes.

Hebrews 3:13 ~ But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

You see, sin is so deceitful, and sin hardens. The more you give into sin, the more it hardens you, and the more it hardens you, the more likely you are to fall away. And then Verse 14, this is the balance:

Hebrews 3:14 ~ For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,...

The idea is those who are truly saved will keep holding fast their assurance. Do you see that? That's the perseverance of the saints. But we should not be presumptuous. We should be humble and we should see the urgency of helping one another day after day. When we see our brother or sister struggling, we should be willing to love them enough to speak the truth and to try to have relationships where they can speak to us the same way. *I'm sensing things just aren't right in your life. What's going on? Maybe it's just me, but it seems like you're distant and you're not as interested in the things of God. What's happening?* And when someone goes away, what do you know? What John says in 1 John about those who depart, what do you know? They went out from us, for they were not of us. Do you see that, the balance? The true believer stays. True believers can stumble and fall, but they come back. Remain in the shelter. The safest place to be is in the shelter, which is in the Name of God. What you've got to do is abide in who God

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is. And how do you abide in who God is? You abide in His word and you abide looking at Christ, because Jesus has, as He said in John 17 a number of times, Verse 6:

John 17:6 ~ “I have manifested Your name...”

“Keep them in Your Name. I have told them what You’re like. I’ve shown them what You’re like.” What we want to do is abide in God, abide in Christ. The more you look at God by looking at Christ, the more you see that He is so good, that everything that He is is goodness. And the more that you come to believe in His goodness, the more that sin is weakened in you, and the more that the lies of Satan are exposed. God is so good. Taste and see that the Lord is good, (Psalm 34:8). Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, in whom there is no shadow of turning. The earth is full of the lovingkindness of the Lord. Everything that we experience in this world is from His hand. It’s good. So the psalmist says, “Taste of the benefits of the world and see of the good things of the world—wonderful food, a warm hug, the joy of coming home after a long trip—all of these things are what God has done, reflections of God. And if you understand that, then Satan is telling you a lie. If these are just the drippings or like the rays of the sun hitting you, the warmth that you feel of the ray of the sun, if that’s that warm on my face, how hot must the surface of the sun be? When you experience a dripping of the goodness of God, the taste of food, the love of your family, or some dear one to you, you’re experiencing just a ray of the sun. If this is just a touch of what God is like, what must it be like to be in His presence?”

So we have to remain in the truth, abide in the truth, abide looking at Christ. Jude, a book we don’t look at a whole lot, most of us, it’s one of those that kind of hides away in our Bibles unless we make a point. Look at Verse 20-23 of Jude, right before Revelation. The next to last book in the Bible is the book of Jude, the half brother of Jesus. He was writing to people who were in danger of being prey to false teachers who were coming into the church and were trying to lead people astray, lead people away from Christ, lead people away from the true faith. And look what he says in Verse 20:

Jude 1:20 ~ But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God,...

He’s saying, “Keep yourselves in the shelter.” Build yourself up in the faith. Keep yourself in the shelter.

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Jude 1:21 ~ keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

Jude 1:23 ~ save others, snatching them out of the fire;...

But keep yourselves in the love of God. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 is a good passage to think about relating to this. How is it you fight against the attacks of the enemy? Paul says there:

2 Corinthians 10:4 ~ (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) 5 We are demolishing speculations and every lofty thing lifted up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,

We're demolishing all of those lies that Satan is telling us about God. That's how we fight for our souls, to stay in the love of God. Keep looking at who God is. Jesus had said in Verse 11 of John 17, right before He says ***...keep them in Your name...*** He says: ***Holy Father, keep them in Your name...*** Holy Father—those are interesting side-by-side terms. The holiness of God, which we sang about earlier is His transcendent greatness, His majesty, His exaltedness, and the fact that He spoke and everything came into being. That's His greatness, His holiness, the distance between Him and us. How small we are and how great He is. That's His holiness, His otherliness. He's that holy. He's that great. But He's also what? Father. He's that near. This great God of glory has stooped down to call you His own dear child. How can you doubt His goodness?

You're considering turning your back on some command of God, going your own way? If you are, you are believing a lie. If it's clear that God has said that you must go this way, and you're going that way, then you're believing that God's told you the wrong thing. You're believing God's given you bad advice. You're believing God is not good. That is so very stupid. But all of us are dumb unless we stay in the truth, in the word. Jesus is the one who shows us what the Father is truly like. And when you look at Jesus, you know that you want to be with God. If this is what God is like, I want to be with Him. I want to obey Him. Even though I don't feel like I want to. Even though I feel like I want to go that way. Even though I feel like I want to abandon God's word and go this way, wait a minute. Look at who Jesus is. I want to be with God.

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I love that song *Jesus, What a Friend for Sinners. Jesus, lover of my soul. Friends may fail me, foes assail me, He my Savior makes me whole. Jesus is a Friend of sinners. Jesus is the lover of my soul.* You can go to Jesus. That's who God is. And so you want to obey Him. So remain in the shelter. The danger is real. Remain in the shelter. So we've seen run from the danger, remain in the shelter, and thirdly:

3) Reach Up to Your Father:

Not only abide in who God is, but reach up to Him in prayer. This is a subtle thing. Sometimes we will be reading the Scriptures and we'll be moved by what we're reading. We'll look at who God is, look at the wonder of who He is, but we'll forget to pray. That should never happen. When you see who God is, what should you do? You run to Him. You express to Him your love and you cry out to Him. You thank Him. You worship Him. You express it directly to Him. You don't just think about, "Isn't it neat that God's like that?" in your own thoughts. "I can't believe how wonderful God is." That's okay. You start there, but wait a minute. Turn this into worship. "Lord, I can't believe that You're like that. You are so wonderful."

The verse that Ted was quoting earlier—*Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? And besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth.* When I see You, Lord, what do I have in Heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. All I want is You. That's what the heart of prayer is, running to your Father. You see the danger. It's around you all the time. You see the sin within you. You see the world around you. You see the pressures and temptations. Well, what do you do? You stay in the Name of God. You keep focused on who the Lord really is, and you believe, and you keep encouraging one another. "No, He is good. He will never let you down." He says, "Open wide your mouth and I will fill it." I love that. Just read through the Psalms and see how good God is. "Open wide your mouth and I will fill it." It's in the context of idolatry. He says, "You're wanting to go after idols. You're thinking that the idol will satisfy you?" What should God say? He should just say, "Boom, you're gone. He should nuke them. He should nuke us." But He says, "The idol can't satisfy you. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it." That's what God is like.

He doesn't say you can't eat from any tree of the garden. He gives you the whole world and He excludes one little tree in the center. Think about what that says about the goodness of God. Now there are a lot more commands because we have sin natures, and we need a lot more fences. But in the original, there was one tiny

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fence around one little spot. He said, “Enjoy the bounty of all that I have made. Enjoy it all. This is who I am. I made all of these things so that you could enjoy them. I made the beautiful flowers. I made the beauty of fall colors. I made all the different spices in the world so that you can have all different kinds of food.” I mean, think about that. Isn’t that amazing? “I made you to have thousands and thousands of taste buds,” even though as you get older you lose lots of them. I heard that the other day. I’ve already lost like 10,000 or something. But it seems like food gets tasting better every year. Anybody else with me on that? Yeah, well that’s God. God gave us taste buds. He gave us these things to satisfy us. Why would you think He’s not good? Because there’s a liar afoot. There is a propaganda campaign, but do not listen to it. Stay in the truth, remain in the shelter, and keep running to your Father in prayer. And if you do that, you will find that He’s keeping you all the way. He’s not going to let you fall out of His hand. That’s what the Lord wants from us.

Let’s go to Him in prayer.

Our Father, we thank You for the fact that You are a God who knows what we need, and You know that we even need it to be now as Your people, in a world where danger is around us, because it keeps us close to You. It keeps us running to You, and when we run to You, we see that there is nothing more lovely, no place more wonderful, than at the foot of Your throne to see Your glory. Father, help us be people who abide in You, who treasure You. For those that are here that do not know You, may today they stop believing the lies, repent, turn from their sins, turn from being the lord of their lives, and fall down before Jesus who is a Friend of sinners, and who will gladly receive them and bring them into the presence of the Father. Thank You that Jesus has done everything necessary by paying for our sins, by being treated as if He lived our lives, our wicked lives, and He exhausted all of that punishment, and He gives us His righteousness. Help them run to Him today. What a Savior. We pray in His Name, Amen.

“What Jesus Prays For – Our Protection”

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