

Jesus' Prayer for Our Preservation

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We return to John 17 and read that chapter together again tonight. Jesus' intercessory prayer recorded here.

1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: 2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. 3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. 4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. 5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. 6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. 7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. 8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. 9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. 10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. 11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. 12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. 13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. 18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. 19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. 20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them

also which shall believe on me through their word; 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: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. 22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: 23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. 24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. 25 O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. 26 And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

Our text is verses 9 through 12 of this chapter and though that's the case, though that's our text and we'll read it in just a moment, though that's our text, we also will be looking rather repeatedly at the fifth head of the Canons of Dort. So if inclined, you can open to that as well and look up those passages as we go through this sermon. That fifth head, of course, is on the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, which doctrine is set out in this text we consider tonight.

Verses 9 through 12,

9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. 10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. 11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. 12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

Beloved people of God, in this beautiful intercessory prayer of our Lord, Jesus stands in the hour, that's the position, he stands in the hour, the hour of his crucifixion, suffering, his death, his resurrection, his ascension and the outpouring of his Spirit on the great day of Pentecost. Each one of these, as it were, another moment in that great hour.

He begins his prayer with a reference to that hour. We read in verse 1, "Father," the very first words of his prayer, "Father, the hour is come." But as he stands in that hour, he prays really from the viewpoint of the completion of that hour. By faith, Christ looks forward beyond that hour of his crucifixion, resurrection and the rest, he looks forward beyond that hour and sees it completed and prays from that viewpoint as if he were already there. We notice that in his prayer. Verse 4, for example, it says there now from the viewpoint of the hour already being completed, he says, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." From the viewpoint of the hour in which he stood, the moment in which he stood, it would say there was much work

yet for him to do, in fact, the crucial and vital important work which he must yet suffer upon the cross when he would say at the end of that suffering, "It is finished." But now he prays, though before that moment, he prays from the viewpoint of that moment having already been completed. "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

Verse 11 as well in our text, Jesus says, "And now I am no more in the world." From a physical point of view, literally at that exact moment, Jesus was exactly in the world, very really in the world. He stood in this world and prayed in the flesh, not having yet died, but he prays from the viewpoint of his having already ascended up into heaven. From that viewpoint he prays, "I am no more in the world."

And again, one more example, verse 24. He says, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." He speaks in the present tense of his already being glorified, already being in heaven, and prays that his people might be taken to be there with him, "where I am; that they may behold my glory." He prays in the viewpoint already of his having been glorified.

Beloved, he does that intentionally. At least one reason that our Lord Jesus Christ prays out loud in the hearing of his disciples from the viewpoint of his having already accomplished his earthly work, having already completed that hour, his intention is so that we can hear how he prays. Not only how he prayed in his earthly ministry but he gives us a glimpse forward, a look forward from that viewpoint forward, to how he prays today. We can hear in this prayer, then, how Jesus prays for us now, the hour having been completed. Now having ascended at the right hand of God, ruling over all things and ruling in grace over his church as our Mediator, as our Intercessor, he prays this prayer.

We look at especially the point of his praying for our preservation in this prayer. He prays for other things in the prayer but in the text before us tonight, he prays for our preservation. So we listen to the word of God tonight with that in mind. What we're hearing explained in the text and what we're hearing explained in the word of God this evening is an explanation of Jesus' ongoing, never-ceasing prayer of grace as our Intercessor in glory. Consider the text under the theme "Jesus' Prayer for Our Preservation." Jesus' prayer for our preservation. First of all, a particular prayer. All the work of Christ is a particular work, a limited work, so too this prayer. Secondly, a mighty Mediator. And thirdly, a wonderful basis.

The main thought of this part of Jesus' prayer, the part referred to in our text, is that he requests the Father, keep those that were given to Christ. We find that in the middle of verse 11. There he says, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." To keep means literally to keep under guard; to defend; to guard against any danger. It means also to maintain, that is, to uphold; to maintain; to keep firm. Jesus says, "Holy Father, make firm, maintain, set a guard over those whom thou hast given to me." In short, Jesus says, "Preserve, Father, thy saints. Preserve thy elect." We'll return to that subject of God's election in a few moments.

But when Jesus prays for preservation of God's people, he refers to that great doctrine which he has made known in his word, that great doctrine which is called sometimes the preservation of the saints, called other times the perseverance of the saints. Don't debate, beloved, don't debate which term is more Reformed than the other. We've heard debates of that sort before, debates that are based on lack of full understanding, perhaps immaturity, not understanding the Reformed faith properly and fully. Both of the terms are perfectly Reformed and perfectly legitimate. Preservation of the saints, preservation refers to God's preserving power preserving his people. On the other hand, perseverance of the saints looks at that preserving work of God now from the point of view of its effect upon his people as he causes them by his grace and by his power, to persevere, not give up, but to continue as God's people in their life.

Both terms are good Reformed terms and both terms are terms that are used by our creeds. Perseverance, for example, is the title as we find it in our Three Forms of Unity, the title of the fifth head of the Canons of Dort. That's how our Canons refers to this great doctrine. The perseverance of the saints. But the word "preserve," referring to the preserving work of God, the preservation of the saints is used frequently within that head of the Canons as well. For example, the end of Article 3, there we read, "But God is faithful. But God is faithful who having conferred grace mercifully confirms and powerfully preserves them therein, even to the end." The same thing was brought out at the beginning of Article 4, "Although the weakness of the flesh cannot prevail against the power of God, who," referring to God, "confirms and preserves," preserves, "true believers in a state of grace." Those two terms beautifully brought together in harmony in the opening line of Article 9 of the fifth head, "Of this preservation," preservation, "of the elect to salvation, and of their perseverance in the faith." The Article means there to say these are one and the same looked at from two different points of view but one and the same.

This preservation and their perseverance, this passage, the passage we have before us tonight, puts the emphasis not so much upon our perseverance but upon God's preservation. Jesus prays, "Father preserve, keep, or preserve thy people." Preservation, then, is God's work of causing his children to persevere. Preservation is God's work of causing his children to persevere in faith and holiness all the way to the end, and in that way, to enter into their place in Father's house of many mansions without any possibility of failure. That's God's work in preservation as Christ refers to it in the text with the word "keep."

That, beloved, that God does for us. If you will have the comfort, and you will and you must have the comfort of this doctrine, but if you will have the comfort of this doctrine, you must know what preservation is not. If we have a wrong conception of preservation, then when something occurs to us which we thought was exempted from our life because we say, "God preserves me from this sort of thing," we'll be greatly greatly troubled and greatly offended. So we need to understand what preservation is not.

Preservation does not mean that God will keep his people, his saints, from all troubles. In fact, many are the troubles of God's people. God preserves them through those troubles

but God does not preserve them, us, from those troubles. The troubles, as we said, and afflictions of God's people are many. The resistance of the world. Persecution for Christ's sake, that all those who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer.

Preservation does not mean that God will preserve us from death. We know that but it's good to be reminded that preservation means God will preserve us through death. God will use death as means in our preservation for our good.

Preservation does not mean we'll be preserved from sin or we'll be preserved from temptation. We ought not think that God's preservation is something that fails a little when we sin; that God did not preserve me as he promised because I sinned, I fell into a sin, a temptation. That's what preservation does not mean, that we will be preserved from sin.

Preservation does not even mean that we'll be preserved from great falls into sin. It's not to have that in our mind either. If God preserves his saints, then that saint that he preserves will never fall greatly into some horrible sin. At times, God's people do. God preserves them in and through that great fall into sin but God does not always preserve his people from such falls.

Preservation does not mean, even, that God will keep his people from walking in sin for a time. For a time. Sometimes God's people walk unrepentantly in sin. Sometimes even for a very long time. I think of righteous Lot. His soul was vexed but he continued living in the midst of the world, condoning the world by his behavior. One example. Other Scripture supplies David and others. God's people sometimes walk in sin even for a lengthy time. God does not preserve them always from that.

God's preservation does not mean that we will never doubt and we will never fear. Sometimes we are afraid. Sometimes we do doubt. Sometimes God's people struggle tremendous struggles against doubt. That's not a shortcoming of God's preservation. We have the comfort God preserves us through those doubts and in the midst of those fears.

All of these are various parts of the life of preserved saint. Not to say everyone experiences all of these in the same degree but these are all parts of, aspects of, moments within the life of the child of God who is preserved by God. Preservation means that these things do not prevail over God's people. The preserved saint is not overcome by these things, by doubt, by sin, by temptation, by troubles and afflictions, but rather preservation means that the reserved saint continues to believe in the midst of these oppositions and troubles and sins. Continues to believe. Continues to walk and when he falls, when he falls into sin whether it be a great sin, whether it be a less significant sin, when he falls into sin and all sin is awful, of course, but when he falls into sin and he walks therein, perhaps even for a time, he arises again. Why? Because God preserves him. He arises again and he continues once again to walk as God gives him grace to do so. The child of God who sins is preserved in that he repents and he believes in Jesus Christ and he continues the walk preserved and therefore persevering all the way to the end.

The Canons, once again the fifth head of that creed in Article 7 and 8 mention six things that are part of the keeping that Jesus prays for in the text. We say Article 7 and 8 because we look at Article 7 first of all to look for these six aspects of preservation. Article 7, first of all, "For in the first place, in these falls he preserves them in the incorruptible seed of regeneration from perishing, or being totally lost." That means when God implants into his elect child of God the child's heart, when he implants that life of Christ, that life of regeneration, he never takes it out again. He never allows that seed to perish or that seed to be utterly lost. He preserves that life within the child of God. That life may not be manifest always in its greatest and most brilliant form, it may be at times that life in a very especially wayward child of God, when God will preserve it may seem that that life is not even evident, not manifest, yet we know God preserves that life yet in heart and soul of his elect child.

Again now, Article 6, a couple of lines in, God does not wholly withdraw the Holy Spirit from his own people, even in their melancholy falls. That is, once God puts the Holy Spirit in the hearts of his child, he never takes the Holy Spirit out again. The Holy Spirit is always there, again, sometimes working more powerfully, more obviously in the life of the child of God and sometimes not, but God always keeps the Spirit in our hearts.

Thirdly, nor does God suffer them to proceed so far as to lose the grace of adoption. God never says about one of his children, "They've gone too far. They've sinned and I will no longer call them my child. They're not a child of mine anymore. Maybe later again I'll make them my child, but for now they are not." God assures us we are always his children. We are always adopted and always have the right to call him Father and to know that we are his children.

Again, not only will God not suffer us to proceed so far as to lose the grace of adoption but also to forfeit the state of justification. God will not renounce his declaration that we are justified. We may not enjoy that. We may not be conscious of that for a time. Article 5 speaks of that. By such enormous sins, God's people very highly offend God, incur a deadly guilt. They feel very guilty and not feel justified but the Canons here states that there is a state of justification, a legal standing in which we are justified, and that legal standing can never be renounced. It is unchangeable no matter what we do or what sins we come into in our life.

Then, again, or to commit the sin unto death. God preserves his people so that his people never commit the unforgivable sin. A tremendous comfort and assurance for us. We need not be plagued with that doubt, that wonderment, "Will I some day commit the unforgivable sin? Will I commit a sin that God will say is a sin unto death and makes me worthy of destruction, irretrievably to be destroyed?" Jesus' prayer says God will preserve, God will keep his people from that sin.

Then lastly, nor does he permit them to be totally deserted and to plunge themselves into everlasting destruction. Preservation means that we will not go to hell. Preservation

means God will preserve us in this life in the way of holiness and godliness all the way unto our heavenly home. That's assured. That's guaranteed because God preserves us.

Jesus is also very clear in his prayer for whom he prays, "those whom thou hast given me," he says. That's who he refers to. We find that twice in the text. Verse 11, "And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me," keep those whom thou hast given me. Again verse 9, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me." By that phrase Jesus means God's elect. He could have said also, "Father, keep thine elect. Preserve thine elect." God's elect people are those given to Christ because they are already eternally given to Christ. Elected in Christ we are. Appointed to be his. Appointed to be saved by him. That's what God means. That's what Jesus means when he speaks of our being given to him. We are his property as elected in him.

We are his elect. In election, election, beloved, is the fountain of every saving good. Out of election flows forth all of the blessings that are known by us in Jesus Christ including preservation. Election is the fountain of preservation as well. There is an error regarding that rejected in error 1 of the Canons' fifth head. You can read that perhaps after the sermon or later this evening.

But then we do not persevere and this is the point of the phrase "given to me," we do not persevere by our strength to get to heaven. That's been an age old error, heresy, condemned by the church. That's what many have promoted, what many have believed, and what many still believe today. That perseverance is up to us. God gives us all kinds of advantages, lays out many opportunities, but it's now up to us to persevere and if we by a power of our free will continue to persevere all the way through in our life, continue to believe, continue to be godly, then as we have done that by our power, then God will take us into heaven.

The fact of the matter is, God elects whom he will. That first of all. And out of that fountain, as we said, comes every other saving good. God elects. In whom he elects, he regenerates. He gives to them that seed of regeneration, that seed of new life in Jesus Christ. And those whom he regenerates, those are the ones whom he calls unto himself and draws unto himself and into his fellowship efficaciously. And whom he calls, those are the ones also whom he justifies, gives to them the gift of faith and by that faith they know that they are justified in Jesus Christ and by Christ alone. Those whom he justifies are the ones whom he also sanctifies so that they walk in holiness of life. Not perfectly but with a real beginning nevertheless. Those whom he sanctifies are the very ones also whom he preserves all the way through their life until finally they are the same ones whom he glorifies and glorifies everlastingly.

Jesus is very distinct on this point, that he prays for those whom the Father has given him. He says, "I pray not for the world," verse 9, "I pray not for the world." There is a point there that we ought to take to heart as well and gives us direction in our prayers. We ordinarily do the same thing, we pray not for the world, and that's good and that's how we

ought to pray. Not pray for the world but we pray for God's people in the world, those who are given unto Christ, those who are elected in him. Jesus says, "I pray not for those worldly people, those reprobate, those who are not given unto me, but I pray only for those who are given unto me."

He speaks also of those who are not preserved, those in one particular example of those who are not preserved, one whom he did not pray for, refers to him as the son of perdition in verse 12, and by that we understand he refers to Judas Iscariot, one of the 12 that followed him but one that was not given to him, not elected in eternity, a reprobate. He says in verse 12, "While I was with them," meaning his disciples, those whom the Father had given to him, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but," the one that was not given, "but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled." That son born out of hell. That reprobate. Judas Iscariot, whom I did not preserve, for whom now I do not pray, he is lost. Lost eternally in everlasting punishment. As I harmony, again, with Jesus' standing already at the end of the hour and surveying all things saying, "I am now with thee, Father. I have finished thy work and part of that work was not that I die for all men nor for that Judas Iscariot. Not that I save him. Not that I preserve him. But rather that he be damned, cut off and destroyed." It is always that doctrine of reprobation which brings into clear focus what a tremendous blessing it is that we're elected and as elected, that we're preserved. We are not as Judas Iscariot, the son of perdition. We are not cast off and destroyed and lost. We are God's elect people.

He prays for his 11 chosen disciples as we saw in verse 11, but he also prays for us here, beloved. He prays for us. It comes out in verse 20 of the chapter, "Neither pray I for these alone," meaning for these disciples gathered with me here. "I pray not only for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." These disciples will soon be sent out as apostles bringing out the word of God and Jesus says, "I pray for all those others who have been elected in eternity and who manifest that election as they believe on the word of Jesus Christ. I pray too that they be preserved, kept by the Father."

He prays for every one of us individually as he prayed for the 11, as excluding the one. "Those whom thou gavest me I have kept and none of them is lost. Not one of them whom thou hast given me is lost." He prays that today too. "Father, keep all my elect people. Keep all those who thou hast loved in eternity, all those for whom I have died. Every one of them. Every individual child of mine, keep them, preserve them."

He prays for us also as an organic unity, as a body, as one united body. Verse 11 at the end he says, he prays, "keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." We would need to say much more about that phrase at this point but for the fact that later on in the prayer Jesus prays very directly for the unity of the church. So we'll save what we would have said now for that time when, Lord willing, we consider verses 21 and following of Jesus' prayer. But notice in passing now, Jesus prays for the unity of the church. "Preserve thy people individually and as a body, that they may be one. In that way I am glorified."

God's elect are preserved. We are preserved, beloved, because we have a mighty mighty Mediator. Jesus is our Mediator. Jesus is our Intercessor. Both of those words refer to him as being one who is between, between God and God's elect people. Not between so as to separate God and his people but between God and his people so as to bring God and his people into one, bring us together to be with God and to bring God through himself, unto us.

He's our Mediator. He's our Intercessor. On our side. Again, when Jesus says he refers to us as those "given unto him," he means this also, that we're given to be his responsibility and so he takes responsibility for us as he stands on our side, as it were, with his mighty arm around us and he stands on our side and brings us unto God, bring our needs unto God. That, first of all, is the Mediator from us to God and that's brought out in this activity of prayer. Jesus prays as our Mediator from our side. He prays unto the Father for us. He prayed then that night before his crucifixion and he prays now too for us.

He prays now too that we be preserved. "Holy Father, keep in thy name all those whom thou hast given to me." Some say very foolishly that Jesus nowhere prays that his people may persevere and be preserved in faith and holiness. Rejection of errors again of the fifth head, Article 9, deals with that and points exactly to this verse and says, "Right here in the word of God you find evidence that Jesus does pray for that." Preservation is part of his interest and part of his work, his intercessory, his mediatorial work on behalf of his people.

He prays for us today and God hears him, beloved. God heard him that night as he prayed the prayer of John 17. God has heard him ever since as continuously he breathes forth this prayer in the presence of his Father in glory. His intercession is not ineffectual, that it's as if Jesus prays and prays and nothing comes of it. Not by any means. Jesus' intercession on behalf of his people is very very effectual.

Article 8 of the Canons says with respect to God, it is utterly impossible that we should fall away and that we should not be preserved, "since his counsel cannot be changed, nor his promise fail, neither can the call according to his purpose be revoked, nor the merit, intercession and preservation of Christ be rendered ineffectual, nor the sealing of the Holy Spirit be frustrated or obliterated." The merit, intercession and preservation of Christ are all put there together in one breath, they all belong together, they cannot be separated. Those for whom Christ has merited the blessings of salvation are those for whom Christ intercedes, and those for whom Christ intercedes are effectually and surely preserved without doubt and without failure, and that because Jesus Christ has merited and has accomplished that merit for us upon the cross. He has dealt with the problem of our sin and our guilt. He has taken the punishment of that upon himself and the wrath of God that was due to us upon himself, that we might have all of that debt erased and have all of our sins taken away and have righteousness and eternal life earned for us, imputed to our account, so that when Christ says, "Father, preserve them," the Father says, "Of course. They are as righteous as thou art. They are as pure and innocent as thou art through thy work, my Son. I hear thy prayer. I will preserve them."

But then Christ is also Mediator not only from us to God as he prays on our behalf, but also he's Mediator from God to us to bring the blessings of God unto us. He does not merely pray and then stand back to see if that prayer will be accomplished, he prays and having the right to take the answer of God, God's grace unto us, he does that also as our mighty Mediator.

He preserves us. Jesus does as one with the Father. He mentions that at the very end of verse 11, "that they may be one, as we are." He has that unity in mind as he prays to his Father, "Preserve them." It's as if Christ says to his Father, "Father, hear me in my prayer. Preserve them through me, by me, by my power, as thy servant and thy appointed Mediator for thy people."

He did that, beloved, in his earthly ministry. He speaks of that in verse 12, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name." With that Jesus means to say, "I brought thy word to them. I revealed thy name unto them. I made known all that I knew about thee unto thy people. I declared thy name among them and it was by the means of that word and the power of that name being declared unto them that I kept thy people, that I preserved these thy disciples who were given unto me. I have kept them in thy name."

And he prays that that may continue as he comes unto the Father. Jesus says, "And now I am no more in the world but these are in the world and I come to thee, holy Father. Keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." Really, that name of God is Jesus Christ himself. Jesus Christ is the declaration of the name of God and so Christ says to his Father, "Now as I go and I am with thee, send me as thy name, send me in thy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel. Send me that through thy name declared by me, thou might preserve all those whom thou hast given to me. Preserve all of thy people." That's how Christ preserves his people, by the means of the word, the word which is Christ himself who comes unto us, lives within us, mightily preserves us, so that wondrously we persevere.

That's, again, brought out by the Canons. Head 5, Article 14, "And as it hath pleased God, by the preaching of the gospel, to begin this work of grace in us," this work of grace refers to the work of his regenerating us and all the rest, "so he preserves, continues, and perfects," this work of grace, "perfects it by the hearing and reading of his Word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings, and promises thereof, as well as by the use of the sacraments." As God began to work in us, began to bring us unto himself, began to call us unto himself and to work faith within us, so he continues by that same word. He continues to preserve us in holiness. By the whole word, Christ speaks and declares the name of God and effectually preserves us.

He works faith, he strengthens faith, as we say, by the whole word as he reproveth, as he rebukes, as he exhorts, as he admonishes us, as he warns us, as even at times he threatens us, as he promises us, encourages us, and teaches us. He dispenses to us his own Holy Spirit himself mightily in the power of that word. He preserves us that we persevere.

And the basis, beloved, of his prayer, Christ's prayer, is simply that we belong to God. He would not, he could not pray this prayer if we were not God's, if we did not belong to him, and he says that at the beginning of our text. "I pray not for the world," he says, "but I pray for them, for thy people, and here's why: for they are thine." There is the reason. There is the basis behind all of it, for they are thine, and he elaborates and shows, once again, the unity between himself and the Triune God.

He says, "All mine are thine and thine are mine and I am glorified in them. As surely," Jesus says, "as surely as I will be glorified, so sure is it that I will and must preserve my people." That's the way Christ is glorified, you understand. He's not glorified, he could not be glorified if he began a work and then that work fell apart or the forces and powers of sin and of darkness overcame that work which he began in one in whom he began it. But he's glorified in that what he begins, he always accomplishes, he always finishes. Christ is glorified because and surely glorified in our preservation because we belong to him.

That idea of our belonging to him means that we belong to him in love. You can't help but notice the love of God in these words. "They are thine, Father. They belong to thee as the objects of thy love and they are mine too, Father, as the objects of my love. Thou hast given them to me and I love them and I give myself for them and I purchase them by the shedding of my own blood. I love them." A greater love that has ever been known or manifested in all of history and in all of the world so that in love he preserves us over against all that which would hate us. Over against the devil. Over against all the world. Over against our own contrary, rebellious, sinful nature. Over against all opposition. Mighty though our enemies may be, we are preserved not by the mighty God but by the Almighty God who has power over all those enemies and controls them so that he averts all evil or turns it to our profit and uses it to preserve his own beloved children and that he does as our Almighty, perfect Savior.

Beloved, the Lord Jesus Christ looks upon you and he says, "Mine. That's mine." He says that in tremendous abounding love, "That one is mine." As you were conceived in the womb, Christ said, "Mine. I will preserve that one. I will let nothing destroy him or her."

As a little child learning how to walk and learning how to believe and learning who God is, Christ said, "That's mine. I will not let any enemies destroy that little one. I preserve him or her by my power."

As a young person with all the decisions and all the various choices in life and all of the temptations and hardships, Christ says, "They are mine. You are mine. No one shall pluck you out of my hand."

As an adult, as an elderly saint, as someday we will be, as our sister is now on her deathbed, Christ says, "No, death, you will not conquer. That's mine. She is mine. He is mine. I will preserve them through death and take them unto myself."

Irrevocably without fail, our Almighty Savior, Jesus Christ, loves us, has given himself for us and therefore, beloved, preserves us. Father hears his prayer and gives him the right and the power to do so. Father and Son are one in our glorious preservation. Amen.

Father, we thank thee and we praise thy Son. Thou hast given us such glorious truth, such amazing, wonderful doctrine. What a comfort it is to our souls and what a glory of thine is displayed in it. We pray, Father, use it within our hearts to comfort us, to cause us to praise and glorify thee and to stir up within us a love, a greater love for thee, that we may continue even by the power of this word to be preserved and to persevere in thee and in thy Son, Jesus Christ. Father, all glory be unto him who loved us, who loves us, and who forever will love us. Amen.