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HAROLD CAMPING

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Christ's  
Prayer for His  
People

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# John 17: Christ's Prayer for His People

By Harold Camping

John 17 is often called "The High Priestly Prayer." This is the prayer that the Lord Jesus prayed to His Father in Heaven shortly before He went to the cross. We are now going to begin to look at this chapter in more detail, as we see what God is teaching us by means of this wonderful prayer.

We read in John 17:1:

**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:**

**"The hour is come."** For 3 ½ years the Lord Jesus, who is the Son of God, had been on the earth, ministering to the people. But always in front of Him was the culmination of His ministry, the time when He was to go to the cross. It was at the cross that He would come under God's wrath in order to demonstrate, through His suffering and death, how He had suffered and died before the foundations of the world to pay for the sins of His chosen people.

This time has finally come about. In fact, immediately after Jesus finished this prayer, we read in the next chapter that He went to the Garden of Gethsemane. So indeed the hour of His death had come. But before He goes to the cross He is going to pray this very beautiful and important prayer that is recorded for us here.

Jesus makes a request of His Father in heaven: **"Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee."**

Jesus is asking God to glorify Him, and He in turn will glorify His Father. This then is about the glory of God. We often sing a familiar hymn, "To God Be the Glory." When we sing those words, we must remember that God includes the whole Godhead: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In this verse that we have read, the whole Godhead is involved. It is Eternal God in every sense of the word that will be glorified.

The event of the cross that is to take place is altogether to the glory of Eternal God. This glory sets the stage for what we read in John 17:2:

**As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.**

We see here that the glory expands beyond the Lord Jesus. This verse is speaking about salvation, and the Father is completely involved in the salvation program. In fact, salvation involves the complete Godhead: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Although the Holy Spirit is not mentioned in this verse, we know from other verses in the Bible that He is intimately involved with the salvation program.

For example, we read in Titus 3:5:

**Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit.**

Also, in 1 John 5:7 we read:

**For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word [that is Christ], and the Holy Spirit: and these three are one.**

So we know that whenever we talk about God, that includes the three persons of the Godhead, who are one God. We cannot understand that, but that is what the Bible teaches.

Now John 17:2 says that **“Thou hast given Him power over all flesh.”** In other words, Christ has power over all of mankind. Mankind is under Christ’s power: that is, under His will and also under His authority. And that power has been given to Him by God the Father. One purpose of that power, or authority, is so **that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.** In other words, Christ has the power and authority to give eternal life, or salvation. And He gives it to those He has been given by the Father.

Salvation is a divine mystery, and the part played by each Person of the Godhead is not something we can understand at all. But God is telling us that salvation is something that is entirely God’s doing. That is a principle that we must always remember.

Mankind is not involved in the decision regarding who will be saved or not. This is worked out entirely by God Himself. In fact, it was all said and done before the world was even created. God had already chosen His elect children and Christ paid for their sins in eternity. We read in Ephesians 1:4-5:

**According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: Having predestinated us unto the**

**adoption of children of Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.**

These that are mentioned in this statement in John 17:2: **“as many as Thou hast given Him,”** includes all those who will become saved. This statement includes all the elect; that is, those chosen by God for salvation. God in His good pleasure has chosen a people for Himself. They are not chosen because of any inherent goodness in themselves. They are chosen in a way known only to God.

Wickedness grew quickly in the world after the entrance of sin into the world. By rights, God could have sentenced everyone to eternal death. He did not have to save anyone. But in His great love and mercy He chose some of mankind to receive His great gift of salvation and eternal life. This is far beyond our understanding, but it is a magnificent truth that cannot be denied. These are the people He is talking about in this beautiful verse of John 17:2. Christ will be glorified as the Savior.

Let us now go on to John 17:3, where we read:

**And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.**

In the first two verses of John 17 God had been emphasizing that Christ has been given power over all of mankind. He has been given power to select those He will save, and He will give them eternal life. The essence of God's glory is eternal life. We know from the words in verse 3 that if God has given us eternal life, then we will know God, and we will know that Christ has been sent to us by God. To know Christ, then, is identified with salvation, because only those who are saved will obtain the gift of eternal life. Therefore, only those who are saved will truly know Christ.

Many people claim to know Christ; they claim He is their Savior. And yet God teaches us that claiming the name of Christ will not save us. For example, we read in Matthew 7:21-23:

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

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

**And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.**

We are only saved if God Himself has given us a new heart. Then we can truly know Him in the way that God is talking about here in John 17:3.

Let us go on to verse 4, where we read:

**I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.**

This is a huge statement. Christ makes the statement that He has glorified His heavenly Father on the earth. Yet we know from the Bible that Jesus still had many things to do before He goes back to Heaven. He still had to go to the cross. Because Jesus Christ is Eternal God, when He came to earth as a man He never ceased to be God. He was without sin. So everything He did while He was here on earth was to God's glory.

What does Jesus mean when He said that He has finished the work that God gave Him to do? We know that He still had to go to the cross and bear the wrath of God. How does that fit in? What work did He finish? In actuality, we cannot know which work God had given Him to do. Certainly coming to earth and ministering to the people was part of His work. He was now finished with that earthly ministry. That could be the work He is speaking of. However, deep in our hearts we know that is not so, because Christ came here as the Savior. So His work was far more complex than that. In fact as we study every action of Jesus before He went back to Heaven, it is all very mysterious. There is so much we do not know. But what we do know is that Christ is Eternal God.

There is so much we cannot know. But what we can know is that Christ had a complete agenda. We do not know what His agenda was. It was not clearly revealed to mankind. We cannot know exactly what Christ had to do, in every aspect. But we do know that God's plan of salvation was fully worked out already in eternity. It was very much Christ's business and the Father's business. We are the recipients of His mercy and the joy, and everything that goes with salvation.

But God did not have to reveal all of that to mankind. We must remember that Christ is Eternal God. We are only humans, on a much different level than the Lord Jesus. We must look very humbly at what God has done and admit there is so much we do not know. All we do know is that it was all done to God's glory. We must simply wait upon God. Remember, we are dealing with Eternal God. Who are we? We are only mankind; we have many limitations. In our pride we like to think we are like God, since we are created in His image. But that does not mean that we can understand God.

Whenever we talk about God, we talk very humbly. We must let Him show us, as we wait upon God. As we go through these verses, we will admit that there are many times we must say we do not know; we do not understand. We simply humbly wait upon God. Why does mankind seek out so many answers to so many questions? That is the nature of man, the way we are created. But when it comes to questions about God, we must be very careful. We thank and praise God for anything He does reveal to us. But we should not be unhappy if there are things we cannot understand. God is far above us.

Now Christ has more to say about God's glory in verse 5, where we read:

**And now, O Father; glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.**

This is really an amazing statement. Christ is speaking about God's glory before He created the world. He is asking God to glorify Him so that He will have the same glory He had throughout eternity past. Only God Himself knows what that glory was. We have no idea at all. It is entirely beyond our imagination.

This is a glorious statement about the character and work of the Lord Jesus. Christ Himself is God. Why does He need to ask this?

It gives us a little idea about the complexity and awesome nature of what Christ is doing. This is part of the mystery of the Godhead. The Lord Jesus was entirely God and entirely man. He never ceased to be God, even while living on earth as a man. That alone is an amazing statement that we cannot understand, but we accept it because God has written these words. When Christ became a man He humbled Himself for our sakes. He never at any time ceased to be God in nature. He never gave up His divine essence.

Yet He set aside His honor and glory; He gave up His divine privileges, if you will. Those who looked at Him while He walked this earth could not tell just by looking at Him that He was the glorious Son of God and sovereign Lord of all creation. All of these things happened, and yet we cannot understand how. All we can do is pray that God will open our spiritual eyes a little more, so we can know Jesus better.

Jesus willingly and obediently humbled Himself by becoming a man on behalf of mankind. When He walked upon this earth He endured constant persecution from the religious leaders, until finally they killed Him. They did not understand Christ at all. But Jesus endured all of this because God had a plan that would not be frustrated. God was in charge. For this reason Christ came to earth and willingly gave up His glory. It was

all part of God's plan for mankind, in a way that man could understand as much as God would help us to understand.

And now in this prayer He is requesting that God the Father will glorify Him with the glory He had as Eternal God throughout eternity. What a demand that is! What a statement that is! Christ could only make this type of demand because He never ceased to be God. We are standing in the presence of glory, and we do not want to diminish it in any way. No one in history ever approached the glorious nature of our Savior. We cannot begin to understand that kind of glory, or what was included in that request. Everything about eternity is a mystery. We must acknowledge that the things of God are a divine mystery, and are totally outside of our ability to understand.

Everything about eternity is a mystery, and here we have the very essence of eternity in front of us. We are so thankful that Christ is in charge, and always remains in charge. If we are honest with ourselves, we know we have no reason to believe we have understood anything correctly about the mystery of God. Everything about God is a mystery, so we must acknowledge that the things of God are a divine, wonderful and magnificent mystery, and totally outside of our ability to understand. We are created beings. We have high opinions of ourselves. But we must go to God humbly, recognizing that God is everything and we are nothing.

We cannot understand how God was going to glorify Christ with His own self. The focus must be upon God's glory. When we think about who Christ is, and who God is, we must speak endlessly about how glorious and majestic God is. Christ gives us more information about His relationship with God, and the fact that He is God in every sense of the Word. How wonderful that God can open our spiritual eyes. We are very finite, but God is infinite. Yet in God's great mercy He has given us a little bit of understanding, and for that we must be so thankful.

Now we read in John 17:6:

**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.**

This statement is very significant. **"I have manifested Thy name."** To manifest means to show. What could Christ show? There is no end to what Christ can show to mankind about Himself. The very fact that we have the pleasure of reading these statements in the Bible and talking about them is all part of the fact that God has manifested His name to us. We should be so thankful that God has manifested His name to us so that we in turn can manifest to others. We dare to make bold statements about God because they are true. We can begin to manifest; we can



begin to focus peoples' eyes upon God, but we have to recognize that He is far greater than anything we can talk about. We can know that God knows us; we are not deserving of that at all. How wonderful that He has manifested Himself to us the way that He has.

This verse is talking about the disciples, that they can know the Lord Jesus. They have manifested Him and glorified Him, and we have been given the opportunity to continue to manifest Him and glorify Him. This is why He has commanded us to go into all the world with the Gospel. This is why we are to declare the Word of God again and again. This is why we have a book as big as the Bible. The Bible talks about the Lord Jesus. What an opportunity it is for us to extol the wonders of the Lord Jesus. We do not have to worry that we are saying too much or exaggerating. We cannot exaggerate when we talk about Eternal God. We can only be thankful that we can say a few words to encourage people and say how great God is. He is infinite in His greatness.

Christ is the first one who is declaring how great He is. He is declaring to individuals what they are to in turn declare. Here are a few disciples who are manifesting and declaring His name to the world. Can you do that? Can I do that? That is where God has placed us if we are His children. So we read: **"Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy Word."** These statements are so glorious; they are so wonderful; they are so powerful. We do not dare take one word that God has declared here in the Bible and think it is not important. Every word is extremely important.

There are some things we can know about God and the Bible, and there are many things we cannot know. In fact, we have learned that there is much that we cannot know. Because we cannot know, we want to be sure that we do not try to force our ideas upon the truth.

For example, we know that God has a salvation program, but we cannot know how He actually saves someone by giving them a new resurrected soul. We know that God chose certain individuals for salvation, but we cannot know how He made the decision about whom He was to choose. Those things are God's business altogether, and we will never know why or how He works that out for each individual. Nor do we need to know. This prayer is putting us on our knees as we seek understanding.

We can see that verse 6 reiterates what Christ told us in verse 2, where we read: **"that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him."**

Here in verse 6 He again makes the statement that God has given certain individuals to Christ. In other words, they were chosen or elected

by God to receive the gift of salvation. They were given to Christ. And because they were saved, they have kept God's Word. That is, because they were given to Christ, therefore they have become saved. Once they have been given to Christ, they will always belong to Christ.

As we go through this prayer, we will see that Christ is speaking particularly of His disciples, who had been with Him throughout His ministry. However, this language applies not only to the disciples, but in a larger sense to all true believers: men, women and children. Those who are chosen of God will be faithful to God; that is the nature of a child of God. They want to be faithful to the Word of God. Sometimes we have to wait to see that faithfulness, but it will shine through.

Now let us go on to verses 7 and 8 of John 17:

**Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are of Thee.**

**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.**

Christ is speaking of His disciples, who understood and believed that Jesus is the Son of God. These are wonderful statements about these disciples, that they really trusted Christ and understood Christ to a high degree. They trusted that Christ was indeed the Messiah. They believed His words. This is where we have to engage in self-examination. We may say we are a child of God and love the Lord, and yet the evidence shows that we are not at all desirous to walk in a way that is pleasing to the Lord Jesus.

If our life shows that we love the things of the world, then we need to be honest with ourselves and ask the question: Am I really a child of God, or just pretending to be one because I know that is what I should be? Are we really showing that we love the Lord with all our hearts and that He is our first love, the one we are thinking about most of the time? If that is not true, then we are in trouble. Even if we have made confession of faith or been baptized, that does not prove anything if we are not being faithful to God's Word.

As true believers, the disciples knew that Jesus was sent to earth by God the Father. They believed everything He told them as being God's truth. We also must be ready to accept everything that God has declared as truth. We need to look at our lives very critically and very honestly. Do I really have a desire to do the will of God with my life? If I do not really want to because I am so attracted to the world, then the likelihood is that

I am not a child of God. But wonderfully, as long as we are living we have the opportunity to cry out to God for mercy.

We have now come to verses 9 and 10 where we read:

**I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for They are Thine.**

**And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them.**

Jesus is again stressing that His main concern is the true believers. That is the main concern of the whole Bible. That is why the whole Bible is so dear and so remarkable in the eyes of the true believers. These are the ones He is praying for. He is not praying for the world, which would include everyone who has ever lived. He is praying specifically for the individuals that are His; those who have become saved. He alone knows who they are, and He will never leave them nor forsake them. They are always in His view.

Jesus really emphasizes the fact that all who belong to Christ are never separated from Him. He declares in verse 10: **“all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine.”** That is God Himself in every essence of His Being. That is, there is one God, and one Savior. God is One, even though He reveals Himself in three persons, something we cannot understand.

Christ is glorified in those whom He has saved. They are the ones who glorify Him as He saves them, and brings them into a permanent relationship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. His wonderful salvation program declares His great glory. There is no possibility of salvation apart from Christ. He not only gives great glory, but He Himself is greatly glorified as He works out His program of being our Savior.

We read in Isaiah 43:6-7 these striking words:

**I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth; even every one that is called by My name: for I have created him for My glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.**

God tells us here that His elect children, those who are called by His name, have been created for the glory of God. We should never work or live or demonstrate an attitude in any way that shows we think we have become glorious. Christ has glorified us to bring glory to Himself, and because He is Christ, we do not hesitate to give Him all the glory.

For God's own reasons, He has a chosen people, and He will save every person He has chosen for Himself. To be chosen means they have been elected. Out of the billions of people in the world, only a percentage of those have been chosen, and God knows who they are. These chosen will bring praise and honor and glory to Christ. This is finally what salvation is all about; that we in our lifetime bring praise and honor and glory to Christ because He is our Savior. Only God has the power and the authority to forgive sins, and these are the ones whose sins have been forgiven. Every human being is a sinner, and we cannot do anything to save ourselves or others from sin. We cannot give ourselves a new heart. It is totally a gift of God. We cannot take any credit for our salvation. Yet we are required to have a new heart if we are going to spend eternity with Christ.

God reminds us in Ezekiel 36:26-27 that all the action of salvation is God's action. There God tells us:

**A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and ye shall keep My judgments, and do them.**

What a glorious truth by our God! All the emphasis and focus is upon God. The whole business of salvation is God's action, not ours, and is totally undeserved by any one of us. He gets all the honor and glory, and never ourselves. I say this because we have a tendency to want to take a little bit of credit upon ourselves for our salvation; yet the tiniest sin is sufficient to send us forever into the wrath of God. But if our sins have been paid for, so we are not under the wrath of God, that has all been taken care of; not because of our holiness or because we excelled in some way, but because of God's mercy. God's mercy! What a glorious action has been taken by God! We can see why salvation is entirely to God's glory.

Everything that God does is perfect, and in His perfect will for mankind, He knows the end from the beginning. That is, in God's perfect will He knows ahead of time who He plans to save, when He plans to save them, how old or how young they will be when they become saved and what action He will take in order to save them. It is all in God's hand, and perfectly waiting to happen. And that is what makes this business of salvation so wonderful. It is not an iffy proposition. It is not a situation that might happen if everything goes just right. No, it has all been planned in a perfect way so that it will take place in God's perfect timetable.

We only know what we can see, and what God has told us in His Word, the Bible. But God knows our hearts. He has His perfect plan for each one of us all worked out in a perfect way. Nothing that we can do can upset God's plan, and that gives us tremendous comfort. We do not have to think that something we do or do not do will upset God's plan for salvation. We are in a perfect relationship with God.

We see God's glory in the world around us, and we see it in our own life. We see it in the Creation: the flowers, the animals, the magnificent mountains, and everything else that God magnifies before our eyes. As we read in Psalm 19:1, **"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork."**

It is so significant that in a verse like this which God wrote, He is not focusing on the glory of the life of a true believer. Yes, glory emanates from the true believer, but nevertheless the heavens declare it. The whole world shows us the glory of God. If only we would take our eyes off ourselves, and put them more and more upon the Lord Jesus Christ. But we see God's glory in the life of a true believer, one who has been given a new heart by God. Each of us should hope and pray that his or her life shows that glory of God's salvation.

A true believer lives in a sin-cursed world, and has been given a new heart by God. That is a big statement. To receive a new heart is to really become a new person. God declares that this person is a new creature, and all things have miraculously become new. We are a new person; we are not what we were before. That is something that is entirely the work of God. Salvation is a miraculous change in a person's heart and soul. It is not because of any action on our part. It is not our work - we cannot take any credit for it. It is all because of what God has done. He speaks and it is done. The difference in our life is what God has done in His own timetable.

Sometimes it is hard to see that we are a new creature, because sometimes we fall into sin. But God is always there to pick us up and put us back on the right path. We would like to see the glory of God in our lives. We should think, "I hope my life shows God's glory." That should be in our minds all the time.

A lot of people are really convinced they are a child of God, and yet in their quiet moments, when they are alone with their own thinking, the thought comes that they have a desire to commit some sin. They think it is okay to give in to a little sin, because they can pray for forgiveness and God will forgive.

No, that is not the life of a child of God. We should be praying that God will take away that desire for sin. "Oh Lord, I had this thought

today; please take it away from me and cleanse me so that I continue to be perfect. Help me to turn away from this, because that is what I do not want any longer." This self-examination should go on in our life. Having a new heart will cause us to have a strong desire to do God's will in every aspect of our lives.

There are a lot of people who are convinced they have become a child of God because they faithfully attend church and they have turned away from some sins. But a true child of God wants to turn away from all sin, without exception, with no limitations. That is our desire. If we go through a day and we do not see any sin that we enjoyed, we can only say "Praise God." It is God who placed that desire there to turn away from sin.

A true child of God will want to live continuously to God's glory, and no longer to his own glory. When we start to honestly compare the glory of man and the glory of God, they are vastly different from each other. But only when we become a child of God can we recognize this supreme change in our life, and the supreme difference in the way we want to live.

This new attitude is totally a result of God's action in our lives, and not because of anything good we have done.

You know, when we are here listening in to what Jesus is praying to His heavenly Father, that is holy time. We should be in awe that Jesus is talking to His heavenly Father, particularly when we know that Jesus and the Father are one. We cannot begin to comprehend this, other than to have a very slight understanding. But the fact that God would allow us to participate in this holy event is amazing.

We are now going on to John 17:11 where we read:

**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.**

That alone is a baffling statement: that we would be kept by God as Jesus Himself is kept by God. Jesus is speaking here of going to the Father. He says "**now I am no more in the world,**" as if He has already gone out of this earth. But He is anticipating what is about to happen. Back in John 13:1 we can read a similar statement that will give us a little bit of additional information:

**Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father....**

He is speaking of a time when He is preparing to go back to the Father. In other words, Jesus was anticipating the hour of His death on the cross, as He linked it to the feast of the Passover. The time had come when He would die on the cross and go back to Heaven to His Father. He had been living on this earth as the Son of Man for over 30 years, and that time was nearly at an end.

We know that Christ Jesus went up to Heaven at the moment of His death, because shortly before He died He spoke these words to the thief who was hanging on the cross beside Him: **“Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.”** The word Paradise is another word for Heaven.

Although it is true that Jesus was going to the Father when He died on the cross, we also know that He rose again from the grave on the Sunday morning following His death. Over a period of the next 40 days, He appeared to many of His disciples before He ascended into Heaven.

During those 40 days Jesus showed Himself to the Apostles to give them comfort and instruction. We read in Acts 1:2-3:

**Until the day in which He was taken up, after that He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen: To whom also He showed Himself alive after His passion with many infallible proofs, being seen of them 40 days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.**

We read in Acts 1:8 that Jesus said to those who were gathered together:

**...ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.**

Then the next verse tells us:

**And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight.**

That was the last time the disciples saw Christ here on this earth. He had finished the work that God the Father had given Him to do on this earth. Remember, we read in John 17:4 that Jesus said, **“I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.”** As you may recall, we realized that we cannot know exactly what this work refers to. But now Jesus is now going to leave this earth.

We cannot understand how Christ could be both God and Man. He was part of the Godhead, and yet He prayed to His Father in Heaven. This is a divine mystery that we should not even attempt to figure out or explain. But we know it is true because the Bible says so. So when Jesus says that He is going to the Father, we accept that statement in faith.

Then Jesus asks His Father to **“keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are.”**

How can the true believers be “one” as the triune God is one? There are many verses in the New Testament that speak of the true believers as being “one body.” For example, we read in Ephesians 4:4-6:

**There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.**

So we see that the true believers, who belong to Christ, are one body. They are the body of believers. They have been given to Christ, and Christ is asking His Father to keep them through His own name. Because they have been given to Christ, they will belong to Him forevermore. What great love Christ has for His true believers! His love and His mercy should fill us with awe.

Now let’s go on to John 17:12, where we read:

**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 in lost, but the son of perdition; that the Scripture might be fulfilled.**

Jesus is continuing to pray for His disciples; those who were chosen out of the world to be forever His. They cannot be lost. They cannot lose their salvation or fall by the wayside. When we are claimed by Christ as one of His own, we will belong to Him forevermore. That is guaranteed by the promises of God.

Jesus had chosen twelve men to be His disciples. But there was one who was chosen for a different purpose. He was not chosen because he was one of the elect. Jesus here calls him the son of perdition. We know from the account in Scripture that Judas was the disciple who betrayed Jesus to the Pharisees in return for 30 pieces of silver.

Judas walked with Jesus daily, heard Him preach, and saw Him perform miracles. Yet Judas was not saved. God used Judas so that the Scripture might be fulfilled.



We read back in John 6:70-71:

**Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot; for it was he that should betray Him, being one of the twelve.**

Jesus always knew that Judas would betray Him. It was all part of God's plan. In John 13, as Jesus was eating the last Passover meal with His disciples, He stated in verse 18:

**I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, he that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me.**

Jesus was quoting from Psalm 41:9, where we read:

**Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of My bread, hath lifted up his heel against Me.**

To lift up the heel against someone is a phrase the Bible uses to indicate betrayal. Already in the Old Testament God was indicating that a close friend would betray Christ. God was always in control, and everything that happened was according to His divine plan.

It is interesting and significant that Jesus calls Judas the son of perdition. The word "perdition" has to do with eternal destruction and eternal loss. For example, we read in 2 Peter 3:7:

**But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.**

So when Jesus calls Judas the son of perdition, He is indicating that Judas is under God's judgment. God uses that same phrase to describe Satan in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, where Satan is called the man of sin and the son of perdition.

The connection between Judas and Satan is even clearer in Luke 22:3-4 where we read:

**Then entered Satan into Judas surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the twelve. And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him unto them.**

It seems impossible that one of Jesus' own disciples would be the person that would help to bring about Jesus' arrest and subsequent crucifixion. But Judas was not one of God's chosen elect. He did not

belong to Christ eternally. Of course the whole world belongs to Christ, as He is the Creator; but only the true believers have an eternal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ stated in John 8:44, while speaking to the Jews:

**Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it.**

In other words, if we do not belong to Christ, we belong to the devil, who is Satan.

So for God's own reasons, He used Judas, who was one of the twelve disciples, as one of the means of bringing Christ to the cross. Judas was one of the many individuals in the scenario God had planned out. God was always completely in charge. From all appearances, Judas was one of Jesus' followers. But in reality he belonged to Satan. Yet God was going to use Judas. Jesus, being God, always knew the role that Judas would play in this tragic drama.

God stresses in John 17:12 that the Scripture must be fulfilled. It is easy to read this last phrase, **"that the Scripture might be fulfilled,"** without realizing the enormous significance of these words. God is a God of truth. Everything He promised will come to pass. In the Old Testament God had promised that the Messiah would come, who would save His people from their sins. The Jews of Jesus' day were very familiar with these Scriptures. For example, we read that the Samaritan woman at the well said to Jesus in John 4:25:

**I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ. When He is come, He will tell us all things.**

The Jews at least understood that God keeps His promises. We know all Scripture is true, because it comes from the mouth of God. Whatever He promises will indeed be fulfilled. We have this beautiful assurance in 2 Peter 1:4:

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

What a great and merciful and loving God we serve!

We have now come to John 17:13, where we read:

**And now come I to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves.**

God is opening up His knowledge resources to us, so that we might see the connection between God and mankind, and especially those He has chosen. There is a bond of love and of joy that ties us together that we would never expect. Every word that Christ has spoken to mankind has a purpose, and the purpose is for the joy of those who become true believers. It is done with a willful desire on the part of God, that there will be certain ones that will be especially blessed by the kind and charitable words that Christ is speaking.

Christ speaks here of His joy. What is the joy of Christ? The Bible has a lot to say about joy. We can read, for example, John 15:11 where Jesus stated:

**These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.**

That is a tremendous statement because it transfers the joy of Christ into the life of a person, and that joy will be forever. We should begin to examine our lives. Where is this joy that He has already provided? If we are able to say: "I know I am a child of God; I know Christ is my Savior," we should be brimming with joy because we can say these things.

We can also read in Romans 15:13:

**Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit.**

Notice that God is showing us that He must give you hope, joy and peace. You cannot just take it or manufacture it; it comes from God. He is the one who does the work of filling us with His joy and the power of the Holy Spirit. So we get the sense that the joy of Christ is entirely different from the joy that the world can bring.

But sometimes the joy that we expect to experience in our life is quite different than we thought it would be. Maybe something very difficult has happened in our life, and we are not feeling at all joyful. There is a possibility that God has brought that difficulty into our life because it is something that we needed, and will be beneficial to us. In fact, that difficulty may be just what we needed in order to grow in grace. There may be something bad rather than good coming along that is happening in our life. But at the end we can look back and see that we

lived through it in a happy way, and we are in a better place with God as a result. We can find joy in our closer walk with God, and know that it is a result of the hardship we had to go through first.

Once we see how God cares for us through hardship, then we can see that God really cares for us. That is the real joy. Then we can finally see that hardship as something good, that it ultimately brought the joy of Christ into our lives, and enabled us to grow in grace and grow closer to God.

So the joy of the Christ is not always what we think it will be. God has His own perfect plan for each one of us, and we do not know what it is. We can take comfort in this. The real evidence of joy is the blessed assurance that we are saved. Salvation is the ultimate joy. Jesus gave His life so that we might have life, and that gives us joy eternally. When we think about our former sinful state, we can rejoice in our salvation. Christ has taken us from the fear of death into this marvelous relationship of knowing we have become a child of God. Praise God, He saved me! I know I will spend eternity with Christ!

One thing is certain: we do not decide what the goodness of God has to be. It is God who does that. God sets the stage. Our lives can be very complex and complicated, yet finally God has opened our spiritual eyes to the joy that is ours. So we should be ready to accept whatever happens, and wait upon God. That is something we have to learn to wait for and to hope for, and when it happens then we know that we are His child.

Often we cannot understand what God is doing or not doing, but we have to wait upon Him. Life is far more complex than anything we could put together in a harmonious way. God assures us that the giving of His life was an integral and necessary part of the salvation story for each one of us. When He saves us it is not something that is simple that we can just feel instantly. No, it can be a very complicated situation in our life, but eventually it will come through: I am a child of God. Christ has saved me. He has come into my life. He has made me His child.

In fact we read in Hebrews 12:2:

**Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

We cannot fully understand all these words, but we know they are absolutely true, and they give us real joy. God designed the salvation program from start to finish. Christ came under the wrath of God to pay

for our sins, something we can never understand. And yet for the joy that was set before Him, Christ had joy in all of this, and He shows us how we can rejoice. Christ has given us joy, and He wants us to have His joy.

What did we read in John 17:13? “...**that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves.**”

Christ is talking about all the true believers, and it is all for the purpose, finally, of bringing us joy: a joy that is way beyond our expectation, because we did not deserve any of it. Christ saved us by giving His life in death, so that we can have His joy. What a glorious, loving God that has provided this wonderful salvation!

Now we are going on in our study of John 17, and we come to verse 14 where Christ declares:

**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.**

This is a very complex verse, so we want to spend some time looking at this language very carefully. First of all, we must decide who Jesus is speaking of in this verse. Jesus is the one who is speaking to God the Father. He states: “**I have given them Thy Word.**”

The ones who have the Word of God are the believers. “Thy Word” refers to the Word of God, the Bible, because that is His Word. In reality God has given His Word to the whole world, of course, but in this verse He is speaking of the disciples as the recipients of His Word, because He goes on to say, “**and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of this world.**”

The world refers to the unsaved; those who are not true believers. The Bible calls the unsaved “the world.” These are not the ones who belong to Christ.

In John 17:6 we read, “**I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world.**” In other words, out of the entire population of this world, only a certain number have been chosen by God and given to Christ to be His own. So in verse 14 Jesus emphasizes that they, the chosen elect, are not of the world. That is, they have been chosen out of the world, and now they belong to Christ.

So we have two groups of people: the ones who belong to Christ, and the rest of the world. They are at enmity with each other, because Christ declared in verse 14: **The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world.**

Why does the world hate the true believers? This verse says they are hated because they are not of the world. What does that mean? We can get a little more insight into this language if we read John 15:8, where Jesus declared:

**If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you.**

What kind of reaction does this prompt in us? We never have to think that Christ was beloved by the world. That is an encouragement to us when we feel alone because of our relationship with Christ. We may be ostracized by family and friends, as Christ was when He was here on earth. Christians have a way of making other people very uncomfortable.

Does the world really hate Jesus? Most people would not say they hate Jesus, even if they make no claim to be a believer. But God tells us in James 4:4:

**Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.**

So God clearly states that we cannot be a friend of the world and a friend of God. We may think we can do both, but that is not possible. God and the world are enemies. The world in general wants nothing to do with God's Word. They want their own authority, not God's authority. They are in rebellion against God and His Word. They have no desire at all to be obedient to the Bible.

Of course, there are many people who say they love God and want to obey the Bible, and yet their lives tell a different story. Their actions are not in keeping with God's Word, in spite of their fine words and intentions. But God knows their hearts.

When we belong to Christ, we are part of His kingdom. We love Him and want to be obedient to God's Word, the Bible. We must live in the world, we have no choice, but we do not belong to the world if we belong to Christ.

The majority of the people of the world do not believe that Jesus is the Savior of the world. In fact, the people of the world do not think they need a Savior. But the chosen ones of God see that they are miserable sinners in need of a Savior. They realize this only because of the fact that Christ has chosen them. Only Christ can give us this understanding.

So Christ has declared about the true believers that they are hated by the world, and they are not of the world. He goes on to say, **“even as I am not of the world.”**

Christ does not belong to this world. He declared in John 18:36: **“My kingdom is not of this world.”** Christ’s kingdom is the Kingdom of God, which is a spiritual kingdom. That is the kingdom that the true believers belong to.

We have come to John 17:15-16, where we read:

**I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.**

**They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.**

This prayer shows that the Lord Jesus Christ is working to have a people for Himself. He does not have a plan to put the true believers in a safe place. They must be in the world because that is where their task is; they have a job to do that identifies entirely with the world. But that does not mean that they belong to the world. Christ repeats again that they are not of the world, and we have seen that this is because they belong to Christ.

They are in Christ, and are an integral part of His Kingdom, even though they are essentially out on the battlefield where there appears to be danger, and where Satan is fully operating.

However, Christ prays that they will be kept from “the evil!” Calling it “the evil” rather than just “evil” makes it sound like evil is some kind of monster. We could say that the phrase “the evil” encompasses everything that is evil and wicked in this world. It is everything associated with the kingdom of Satan.

Jesus prays that His heavenly Father will protect the disciples, and therefore all true believers, from the evil of Satan. As citizens in this world, we are in a place where Satan can see us. But we have protection: the protection of God’s Word. Satan can make no claim upon those who truly belong to Christ. He may try to attack them, but he cannot have victory. The true believers have God’s protection, and God is infinitely more powerful than Satan.

We cannot be taken over by Satan when we belong to Christ. Christ will fully protect us. And most importantly, Satan cannot take away our salvation.

However, many people who think they are safe in the arms of Jesus will fall into grievous sin because they are not truly saved. The fact

that they fall may be evidence that they are not saved. They have fallen into Satan's clutches without realizing it. How is this possible? Don't we recognize evil when we see it? Can't these people recognize evil as easily as anyone else?

For God to protect us from evil does not mean that bad things cannot happen to Christians. They can be killed or hurt by evil people. We have all heard of this happening.

Much of the evil in the world is obvious wickedness, such as lying, corruption, murder, and the like. The world is full of this evil. It is not too hard to steer clear of this type of evil, which we rightly identify with Satan. However, the most terrible evil is the evil we cannot recognize. Evil is not always obvious. Satan is the master deceiver, and he can present himself as being very good.

We read in 2 Corinthians 11:14 that **"Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."** How is that possible? How can Satan be an angel of light when we associate him with darkness, and Christ with the light?

Remember, Satan is a master deceiver. In Revelation 12:9 God calls him **"the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world."** And he wants to look like Christ in order to deceive people into thinking they are worshipping Christ, when in fact it is Satan they are worshipping. So God goes on in 2 Corinthians 11:15 and declares:

**Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.**

Christ here is talking about the characteristics of Satan's followers. So Satan uses people in his deceptive work, and they look like ministers of righteousness. They are part of the deception, because they look righteous but are actually Satan's servants.

God also declares in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4:

**Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.**

If Satan is in the temple of God showing himself that he is God and looking like an angel of light, how will we recognize him? We expect Satan to be evil and wicked. We do not expect him to look like an angel of



light, which is something good. He is all wickedness, yet to our eyes he is an angel of light, because he is deceiving us. How can we then be protected from this deception and not fall prey to Satan when he appears to be an angel of light?

It is God that must give us protection, because only Eternal God can open our spiritual eyes. He gives us more information about this in Isaiah 35:5, where God is speaking of the elect when He says,

**Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.**

He is speaking here about our spiritual eyes and ears as they are opened to truth. However, we read in John 12:40:

**He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.**

In other words, if someone is not one of God's elect and has not been chosen for salvation, he will remain spiritually blind. He will not have understanding of spiritual things. So this person will not recognize Satan's deception when he appears as an angel of light. He will be blinded from seeing the truth of God's Word, and will not have the assurance of God's protection from the evil.

In John 17:15 Christ prayed that His heavenly Father would keep the true believers safe from the evil, which includes anything and everything under the power of Satan. Jesus understood the necessity of this protection for His elect. We can praise God because we know we have His protection as we live in this evil world. We do not fear that evil when we belong to Christ.

We have come down to verse 17, where we read:

**Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth.**

Verse 17 is a prayer for sanctification. To sanctify means to set apart, or to cleanse from sin; to make holy. It means there is no spot or wrinkle within us to inhibit God's ability to use us. It is a word that has a lot of spiritual meaning. The Bible talks about the fact that we have become sanctified, but we must realize that it is God's action entirely.

God has declared that we need sanctification. We need to be cleansed and purified in order to be prepared for the big and wonderful task that God has assigned to the true believers: that of representing the Kingdom of God to this world. He will make sure we have these capabilities if it is His plan to use us. That is what is emphasized in this

prayer that we have been looking at; namely, that God will sanctify us through His Word. His Word is truth; the only truth. God brings His Word of truth to the true believers and applies it to the hearts of the ones He is sanctifying.

We are sanctified by God while we are in this world where wickedness is everywhere. God's Word makes us holy, cleanses out the dross, and removes things that are contrary to truth. This is an on-going process in the heart and life of a true believer. As God works in someone's life, he becomes more Christ-like and less attached to the things of the world.

We often speak of this process of sanctification as growing in grace. We grow in God's grace as He cleanses us and makes us holy. Grace is the gift of love that is making us holy without any work at all on our part.

We read in 2 Thessalonians 2:13 that: **"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."**

This is all activity that God performs in the life of the one He has chosen for salvation. The Word of God is truth. It includes all that is written in the Bible; all of God's commands and promises. Everything that God has spoken in His Word can help us to grow in grace, as God applies His Word to our hearts.

All cleansing to sanctify us is the product of God operating in the life of a believer to show that we are not of this world. We are sanctified through the Word of God which comes in truth.

So we see that as Christ prays for the true believers, He is praying for their salvation, their protection from the evil one, and their sanctification. He is intimately involved with the spiritual welfare of those whom He has chosen from before the foundations of the world to be His own. He is greatly concerned with their spiritual well-being. He does not save someone and then leave them on their own to make it somehow. No, He prays for them, He protects them, and He sanctifies them. They belong to Him, and He is their Savior and protector for as long as they must be in this world, and on into eternity.

Jesus is very aware of the evil in this world, and He wants to stress that the true believers are not of this world. In fact, in Hebrews 11 God calls us strangers and pilgrims on this earth. And in 1 Peter 2:11 God instructs us this with these words:

**Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.**

This is another example of God's loving protection. His Word instructs us how to live a godly life. And He reminds us that we are strangers and pilgrims in this world, because we belong to the Kingdom of God. This world is not our home, ultimately. But as long as we are part of this earth, we are under the care of Christ.

What a blessing to be under the care of Eternal God! We need never fear the evil in this world. Our trust is in Eternal God, who loves us and promises to care for us. He cares for us always.

It is a great comfort to know that Christ prayed for the disciples, those who were closest to Him. His prayer for the disciples applies to all of the true believers. In fact, God's Word, the Bible, assures us that God prays for His chosen people. We read in Romans 8:26 these very comforting words:

**Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered.**

What a wonderful statement this is! It is way beyond our capacity to understand this. Our infirmities include any area where we are spiritually weak, and this would apply to all those who belong to the Lord Jesus. We cannot understand these words, or understand how the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us. But it is a tremendous comfort to know that God cares for us so deeply and richly. He will not leave us on our own in this world. This is showing us how rich the love of God is for those who are His children.

That is a wonderful blessing. We can know that when we read something in the Word of God, it is true. God is not playing games with us in any way. The Bible is true. But the whole problem is that we have to listen to it; we have to pray that God will apply it to our hearts. It has to become real in our lives. The true believer must be sanctified through the truth of the Word of God.

How can the true believers be sanctified by the Word of God? God works in their lives to purify them and make them holy. How does God actually do that? We do not know. We do know however that we are under the care of God altogether, and God is God. When we look at this complex world, and see all the beautiful things God has designed and built without any help from mankind, we realize it was all done by the wisdom of God.

In the same way, God makes it possible that He can sanctify the ones that He wants as true believers so that they are spiritually clean and

absolutely prepared to be used of the Lord the way He wants to use them. We cannot understand that; we cannot tell anyone how this happened. But we know that it does happen because God Himself has said that He would sanctify them in His truth. God works in our lives if we are true believers to purify us and make us holy.

Christ continues to speak of sanctification in verses 18 and 19, where we read:

**As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.**

**And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.**

When we read a sentence like that, right from the mouth of the Lord Jesus, we are filled with awe. What is God talking about? It begins to open up to us that Christ here is showing how much He became involved in our own lives when He saved us. We have to remember that this world had come to a terrible position, in that sin became common in this world. Sin is not common just to wicked people who by nature want to sin all the time, but it is true of you and me and any one of us. By nature, we have a penchant for sin. We do not really know what it is to live a sinless life, and we are learning that any kind of a sin is a terrible thing. How can we learn from the Lord Jesus, who is perfect in every aspect of His being, that He is somehow doing this for us?

This is very complex, because Christ is saying He has sanctified Himself in order that the believers might be sanctified as they are sent out into the world. This is an action of Almighty God Himself, as He works in the lives of the true believers. It is very mysterious; it is something that we can ask a lot of questions about and not find answers. But do we always need answers? No. We need to accept what God has declared: that He has sanctified certain ones to make them available to get the truth out into the world.

There is no human being who can explain how that happens, but we know it is a marvelous truth that makes all the difference in the world, because to be sanctified means that we have been made holy. It means that we have been qualified by God to go out now as a representative of the Kingdom of God, as a representative of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a task that is way beyond our natural ability, and yet we are completely prepared for it when God has done the sanctification.

**“As Thou has sent Me into the world,”** Jesus is saying, **“even so have I also sent them into the world.”** That is a very powerful statement. What God is talking about here is the ultimate sending out.

The sending out to share the true Gospel is God's effort. **"I also sent them out into the world."** First of all God Himself has sent Christ into the world, and now He is likewise saying: "I am Christ, and I am sending you into the world." So it is a powerful statement, because God is talking about Eternal God Himself. The whole business of sending the Gospel into the world begins with Christ doing all of the important activity. If He were not at the head of all this, it would never succeed.

God Himself has prepared us and sent us to bear the beautiful, wonderful message of the Bible, of God's love for mankind. All of this has happened because of Christ's love for this world. God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son in order to provide salvation. That is, God gave His Son in death because of His love for mankind in general, but His elect in particular. And He has given us now to the world, if we are His children. If we are His disciples, if we are following in His plan, this is what we desire as true believers. We want to follow only God's plan. So God Himself enters into our lives and makes certain that we are doing exactly what God wants us to do.

He has given to all of us the written Word of God. That written Word is what should be written on the notebooks of our hearts, and inscribed into our thinking. God has given us this Word to share.

We can read in the Bible how Christ came to earth as a baby and later on began to preach, and so on. We know that did happen. But here God is emphasizing that God sent His Son to us in order that we might know the truth of salvation. He in turn will send the believers into the world, as they follow after Christ.

This is really astonishing when we see that God has entrusted the elect with the enormous responsibility of carrying His Word into the world. Who are the elect? We already have learned it is those who had been chosen by God to be representatives of the Kingdom of God to this world. To be chosen by God as a representative is beyond our imagination, but He did this. And if we are chosen by Him we should have an intense desire in our hearts to represent the Kingdom of God to this world, as we bring the message of salvation.

We have this opportunity, even though we may lose our physical life because of it, or lose our place in society. That is unimportant. What is important is this: Am I being faithful to the Word of God? Am I representing the Word of God the way the Bible tells it to us? These are things that should be of major concern to us. God will make sure that we have the capability to represent Christ. It is astounding that we have any capability at all. Where did we get that capability? We did not get it out of our own hearts, or our own lives, or our own training. We got it because God gave it to us. As a consequence we have an intense desire to be as

faithful as we possibly can be as we send the Gospel into the world. Only such people will be used of God to represent the majestic, wonderful, eternal Kingdom of God to this sinful world. We are standing forth as true representatives of the Kingdom of God, as those that have been truly sanctified.

The Bible tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:20 that we are ambassadors of Christ. But we cannot be an ambassador of Christ until we are sanctified. To be an ambassador of Christ is a wonderful role that God assigns to every true believer. An ambassador is a true and fit representative of Christ. God has planned that every true believer is to be an ambassador, so that He can use us. He does use us to represent the precious Kingdom of God to a sinful world that is in desperate need of truth. The world is in desperate need of something better than what is being offered to it. And if we are following the Bible accurately, and only the Bible, then we are able to be an ambassador of Christ.

But God will sanctify us so that we can be an ambassador. He will sanctify us by cleansing out of our lives anything that will build up our ego. We should become more and more humble; more and more thankful to God; walking as those who love only Christ. And in our love for Christ we pray that God will use us to share the Gospel, and share only the truth. Then we are a good ambassador for the Lord Jesus Christ. God is active in seeing that His chosen ambassadors are properly cleansed.

Are we cleansed right at the beginning? No, at first we are part of the world; we are sinful and laden with sin and guilt. But once we have been sanctified, we are cleansed of all that. We can begin to be used of God to share His Word, so that God's words in turn will have power in the lives of those that hear. Then we have become active in the cleansing of the world, because we ourselves have been cleansed of sin. It all starts out with Christ and ends with Christ. It is dependent upon the fact that we have to look to Christ for help with all of this.

We cannot just decide "I want to be great in this world; I want to really be used of God in some way. So God, just give me a task and I will do it and I will do a wonderful job." It is not that we have so much ambition or ability; it is only that Christ Himself has qualified us. We become His ambassadors. When He qualifies us, then we are truly God's servants. Then there is truly worthwhile spiritual activity going on. All of this has to be set up by God. That is why it is a spiritual situation of God cleansing us and preparing us. Then God can use us to evangelize in this world. What a wonderful task when God has given us that task. Nothing is as important as representing Christ to this sin-cursed world.

But it can be a great temptation to take part in those sins, because as we go into the world with the Gospel, we also go in with our

shortcomings. So we constantly should be asking God for cleansing and purifying so that we will be a fit representative. We must be properly cleansed of sin in order to represent the beautiful, wonderful Kingdom of God to this sinful world. We do not come empty-handed into the world; we come with a wonderful piece of information: The Kingdom of God and all that goes with it. What a joy that is!

The world is clamoring at us to get us away from that, and back to the drudgery and the misery of the world, because they want us down with them. But we have to keep our eyes focused on the Lord Jesus. He is the one who has to sanctify me and has charge of my life. I am so thankful for the Word of God because as I read it I become encouraged to come to God for help and strength, and for faithfulness to that Word.

So we come into the world with the Gospel. But do we recognize how serious this is, and how easy it is to lose sight of the Gospel? We have people all around us who want our attention. We have a lot of temptation coming at us. We have to pray all the time that God will keep us faithful and keep us from slipping. Only when I am doing God's will am I safe and secure. He has to guide us and hold us fast. The Word of God is our strength.

The true believers are cleansed through the action of God Himself in their lives. An integral part of the life of the true believer should be to cry out to God for mercy. We must make ourselves available to God and be ready to work. It is something that God puts there, and our prayer is, "Oh Lord, use me." So we are ready to be used of the Lord once we understand that it is all done by God. But we must be cleansed of our sins, and we know that Christ will cleanse us if it is His desire to use us to send the Gospel to the world.

We read in verse 19: **"And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth."** In other words, God wants mankind to be as perfect as He is. What an astonishing goal this is! To be sanctified means that we have been cleansed of all sin. We have become absolutely holy. How can that be?

It is one thing to know that we have a holy God, who we stand in awe of altogether. And yet to say that He is sanctified and we also are to be sanctified by the action of God shows us just how rich and wonderful salvation is. We read about Christ becoming sanctified. But for us to also be sanctified is astonishing, because by nature we are sinners in rebellion against God. But God has to sanctify us if we are going to live with Him in Heaven, or if He is going to use us on this earth.

Christ's action of sanctification means that we are not only cleansed of sin, but we are also without the guilt of sin. When Christ

saved us, our sins disappeared. We have received a new resurrected soul. God has cleansed us altogether, so it is as if sin has never been attached to us in any way. That is how God has cleansed us. We will go into eternity with that cleansing. But to get there Christ has to save us. Those sins had to be paid for, so Christ made all the payment.

That is why salvation is so complex, and such a marvelous thing beyond our comprehension. We cannot possibly understand what Christ had to do in order to cleanse us from all sin, so that when we are in Heaven forevermore there is no taint of sin. We are whiter than snow; as clean as anything can be clean. That is what the cleansing power of salvation has to do with. Every single human that Christ came to save will have his sins wiped away, so that we stand before God as if we had never been a sinner. We are cleansed by Jesus' blood. We do not know how that really operates in our lives, but we do not have to know. We just have to know it is true.

What a wonderful salvation! When God cleanses us, the slate is wiped clean. And so when we read in John 17:19 that **"for their sakes I sanctify Myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth,"** we can begin to see some of the truths. We cannot understand it, but it is a fact that it has occurred. We are sanctified through the truth, and Christ is the essence of the truth.

Of course as we are going on making these wonderful statements, we might get the idea that once we are saved, we now have been guaranteed never again to sin, or be at odds with God. But that is not so, because as long as we are on this earth, sin will be trying to get our attention. Yet when all is said and done, and the last action has been taken, we will stand sinless before God if He is our Savior.

We cannot shout to the world that we have been cleansed and no one will ever see sin in our lives again. That is not correct, because we still have a sinful body. Our "old nature" is at odds with our new resurrected soul. But when we have been saved, we can say that by God's mercy we have been cleansed of all our sins. Now I find that sin is despicable; I want to do things God's way, and yet I know I still fall. But when I do fall I know can go to Christ and get forgiveness immediately. There is a certain setting in which I live, which is entirely different because Christ has become my Savior.

As long as I live on this earth, sin will be crouching at the door, and I have to pray constantly. That is a wonder also: not only am I free of the lock of sin; I am free to go to God again and again for additional strength and additional guidance, so that I will continue to have this desire to never want to sin again.



In this study of John 17 we have come to verses 20-21, where we read:

**Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word;**

**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.**

These verses are telling us that God has the whole world in view. Christ has been praying for the disciples, and He has indicated that they, along with all true believers, will be sent into the world to spread the Gospel. Christ has sanctified them for this purpose.

Now in verse 20 we see the result of the believers being sent out into the world.

There will be those who believe on Christ as a result of hearing the Gospel that the true believers are bringing. In other words, God will use the witness of the believers to bring others to Christ. This will be the methodology that God has employed throughout the world, which God will use to bring salvation.

God knows who will believe, where they are and when they will believe. The action of saving someone is all God's action, but He uses His followers, who are the true believers, to spread the Gospel to those that God is planning to save. This is the program that God has set up.

The reason for all of this is further explained in verse 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."**

This is a very beautiful statement that Christ makes: Christ is in God the Father, and God the Father is in Christ. Yet there is one God.

We know from a verse like 1 John 5:7 that God is three persons in one. We read in 1 John 5:7:

**For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost and these three are one.**

God is one God, but He consists of three separate persons. We know this is a divine mystery. We cannot possibly understand this concept, but that does not mean that it is not possible or true. We know it is true because God tells us so in His Word.

So when Jesus states in John 17:21 that He and the Father are one, we know this is true. The Father and the Son are two different persons, but God makes this firm declaration that they are one.

Even more amazing are the next words in this verse: **“that they also may be one in Us.”** The true believers, then, are part of this oneness. We are one in Christ; part of Eternal God’s plan. No one stands alone: we are all part of God’s plan. We do not know how, but we know it is true. God’s plan is that we are all in harmony with each other: the triune God and the true believers.

This, then, is God’s plan: that the world may believe that Christ was sent by God the Father. There is no question that this is true. The perfect unity of God and the believers is the proof. God’s plan to save His elect is perfect. It is not because of our works; it is God’s work alone. What an incredible salvation plan! It is beyond comprehension.

The task of getting out the Gospel is a God-given program that was not just given to a few certain individuals or groups. It is the task of all of the true believers. And wonderfully we see God’s care for His salvation program, as Christ prayed, **“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.”**

Christ prays for those who are the witnesses of the Word, and He prays also for those who will believe on Him as a result of that witness. But it is not the eloquence of the speakers that will bring people to salvation. No, it is the Word of God that will bring salvation.

It is not because of our words; it is God’s Word alone. God uses people, but He is the one who applies His Word to the hearts of those He intends to save. He will do this and nothing can restrain or prohibit Him from doing this, because the Lord is Eternal God. His Word will go out precisely as He desires.

Every true believer receives new life in a new resurrected soul, without any question. That is something we do not understand at all, but it does happen.

The point that Jesus is making is that He wants everyone to understand that there is one Gospel, headed up by the Lord Jesus. He is in charge. That is why there can be this unity He is talking about. God is one God, and He is one with the believers. There is one God and one faith. There is one salvation plan. It is God alone who can make us all one in Christ. We cannot do anything ourselves to bring that unity with God, but God makes sure it is done. When we know something is done by God, we know that it will be done. Nothing can restrain God from carrying out His plans.

As we go on in John 17 we will see even more evidence that we are one with Christ if we are one of His elect. If we are one of His elect, we will be one with Christ, without any question. In verse 22 we read these beautiful words:

**And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one.**

We should tremble at the character of this bold sentence, which brings the believers together, and then brings them together with Christ Himself. Christ is praying that we would be one with God, even as God is one. This is an amazing statement on our behalf. It is like He is saying there is really no difference between the believers and God Himself. He lifts us up to a position that is beyond our nature to attain. God is the one who makes it possible.

We are in an area where we have no understanding. These are true statements because they are stated by Christ, but we humbly acknowledge that we do not know how this goes together. We only know that God is the supreme Creator of the world, and He has brought us into a relationship with Christ. It is only because of God's magnificent love that is beyond our ability to understand. Yet it is stated as a fact; that we have obtained it.

This is not something we would ever dare to say. Yet God, who is our Savior, dares us to say that we are one even as God is one. How can that be possible? We only know this is true because God is behind it all.

The first part of the verse gives us the answer to some degree. Our oneness with God is not because of anything inherent in us. Our oneness with God is not because of something that we have attained. It is because God has given us His glory. It is God's action; He is the one who has given us that glory. He is the one who is in charge entirely. What a wonderful God we have! We do not understand how or why He does this, but we understand that it is a divine truth.

Christ is the Creator of the world, and the one who upholds it in His power. God Himself gave glory to Christ, and this glory is also given to the believers. What could be more glorious? No one could ever come close to God's glory. But the true believers are a reflection of God's glory because of the fact that Christ Himself is the one who has caused it all to happen.

This is a stupendous fact: God has given us a glory that can be measured and viewed in the lives of the true believers, in the light of God's glory. Because Christ Himself is glorious, therefore in the true believers we see a reflection of Christ's glory.

We do not know how that is possible. But we must remember that God is in charge of all the glory, and He is the essence of all glory. Christ is speaking, therefore we accept it as truth even though we cannot begin to understand how it happened or why it should happen. We are ordinary people, after all.

We certainly cannot insist on understanding these words before we accept it as truth. Our human minds are incapable of understanding such glorious information, because it is entirely an unearned and undeserved gift of God.

This should cause us to walk humbly. We give all glory to God. It is not easy to walk humbly before God. By nature we are proud. But it all comes from God, so we should walk humbly. We should always give Christ all the glory. In other words, instead of making us feel grandiose or full of conceit or pride, it should make us feel exceedingly more humble before God. Who are we, that we should receive anything like this from God?

We recognize that we are still worthless sinners by nature, apart from what Christ has done for us in our lives. And yet God has chosen us and given us His glory, and made us one with Him. So we walk with humility, knowing that this could have happened to us in our life. Man's pride and conceit is always right there at the threshold of his thoughts. We know that is true, and we have to be aware of it if we are going to walk righteous before God. But pride does not belong there if you are a true believer.

We can never go wrong by locking out of our thought processes anything at all that borders on personal conceit and pride. Look at yourself very honestly every day, and you will find that every one of us has a problem with pride. But it does not belong in the life of a true believer.

When we look at the truth of our lives, it will help us to walk humbly before God and before our fellow man. It is not an easy task, but it is part of the walk of a true believer that we want to do it God's way. We should see a little more humility in our walk as we examine our prayer life and examine everything we are doing. God is the one who will help us see pride and will help us turn away from self-pride. Every one of us should make this a matter of prayer.

Now we go on to verse 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.**

Christ is talking here about a unity that develops. Christ has come for a very specific purpose. Does the world know anything about it? Not normally, no. But once we see Christ in operation, as He sends the Gospel into the world through the lives of the true believers, then we begin to see the harmony and the unity. We begin to understand how it works out; that God has indeed given us the glory that was His at first, and then the glory is given by Christ to the true believers. We are one with Christ, as well as one with each other. We have one great desire, and that is to do His will as perfectly as possible.

And so we read, **“That they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them.”** The One is the Lord Jesus. He is Eternal God. In other words, it is so factual and true, that finally the world can know of these people who become one in Christ, not because of their efforts, but because Christ has been working in their lives. Therefore they have different lives; lives that have been committed to the Lord Jesus Christ.

That is something only God can provide, and He does provide as we become His servants. We look at our lives as long as we are living here, and we never see total perfection. But we also know that God is a forgiving God, and what God sees is that which is perfect. That which is imperfect is not held against us because we are cleansed by the love of God. The thing that Christ is emphasizing here is that the true believers are perfected so that they are adequate representatives of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are under His care and we are supervised by God Himself. He is the one who guides our lives. In fact every true believer will be constantly praying for guidance and strength. We have a constant stream of requests that we send out to our Heavenly Father, because we need help to live in a way that is pleasing unto God. In this way God’s work is accomplished.

It is Christ who has placed us under His supervision. We cannot look at our life and begin to set forth everything that we are thinking and doing, and add them all up and say we are perfect. No, as long as we live in this world we are going to be imperfect beings, and we have to go daily to God to ask for forgiveness. We are so happy to know that He is a forgiving God and we can ask Him to strengthen us in our lives. This is the way we live out our lives, and through it all we are growing in grace. That is, we do not continue to commit the same sins over and over. We find that we get victory over this sin and victory over that sin, but we are never satisfied because we will never reach perfection in this life. We will only reach perfection when we are with the Lord Jesus forevermore.

The end product of all of this is that we know we are living more faithfully before the Lord than we used to. But hopefully the world itself - our friends and acquaintances - will see a distinct change in our life as

well. We want the world to know this, but not for our glory at all. In fact, as we live more faithfully before the Lord, the world may despise us. They may feel we are missing the glories of this present world.

So we do not look to the world for the proof that we are doing well before the Lord. This is something very personal between ourselves and the Lord. But that growth will be there. There will be an inner happiness in our life that was not there before. We learn the secret of all of this when we read, "**I in them.**" That is Christ in me. If my life is really pleasing to God, it is only because Christ has guided me into it. It is such a beautiful thing that has developed in my life, that Christ is in me, and I am in Christ. Christ is my Savior and is guiding my life. It is because of His love for me.

As Christ has been loved by God, so God's love extends to all those that belong to Christ, who will serve Him to the end. As God places His love on our lives, that love will be manifested.

We live faithfully serving Him, and He is the one that brings glory into our lives. This is a part of what has happened when we truly become His child and are living for Him. We are one in Christ. Our whole attitude toward life is that His glory may be emphasized. It is not our glory; it is Christ's glory. We cannot begin to understand this, but Christ can put us on a real path of knowledge. Christ is our Redeemer and we are holy in Him.

We know those as true statements but we do not always feel it in our very being. At other times it comes upon us like a wave of emotion - that we belong to the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus is my Savior. How wonderful that really is! With Christ caring for us, we will experience all of the wonders that Christ has brought about, and we can call upon Him as our Redeemer and Savior.

There should be a real sense of being one in Christ in the life of someone who is truly saved. We come to a point when we feel safe in the arms of the Lord Jesus. We pray for this because that is what we want. We want to be one in Christ. We want to be so close to Him that nothing can separate us from Him. He is the one I love; the one I am waiting for. He is everything in our lives, because He is our Savior and Lord. He is everything to us.

We go on in John 17 and read verse 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.**

This is an exceedingly impressive statement. When we first look at it, we think Christ is certainly concerned about Himself, that He gets all the glory. The fact is that God here is setting forth a very big piece of information: namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ is God, and therefore is entitled to everything. We must understand that in order to understand the things He does.

In this verse Christ states that what is given to Him must be given to each and every one who is one of His children. All of His children belong to Him because He has made payment for their sins. It is one family; no one is left out. Everyone is included whose sins have been paid for; it is all-inclusive. No one is left out accidentally. It is all done with magnificent accuracy, and always to the glory of God. The Lord Jesus will follow through on what is being done, to make sure it is done precisely without any mistakes of any kind.

That sums up what happens when we are dealing with God. We all have dealings with humans, and often we are treated well, but not always. Many times we are unhappy about how we have been treated. But that never happens with God. God has everything planned in minute detail, and all is under His control. He continues to keep control of us as we are part of His program of dealing with mankind.

As we examine this language carefully we see that it is talking about more than just this earth. We are deeply concerned with this earth, or course, but what about eternity? We can know that this will go on into eternity, as Christ declares, **“Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.”** Christ will be in Heaven, in eternity forevermore. This is an absolute assurance that we will be with Him. We do not just hope we will be with Him. This is an absolute guarantee. He says **“I will.”** This is a statement of declaration that God is making. What a fantastic declaration! Christ is God and will never go contrary to what He is saying.

This is an absolutely guarantee that we humans cannot understand. We all make guarantees in life, but we never can make an absolute guarantee. It is always subject to failure, in spite of our good intentions, because of our weaknesses and lack of ability. But when God uses this kind of language, it is absolute, because God is God. He is Eternal God. It will absolutely happen. We often see promises made and broken, so this is a tremendous statement because it is made by God. There is no possibility that anything can stand in the way. It will happen, and we can rejoice.

This promise is built upon a consideration that reaches all the way back to before Christ created this world. So it has substance beyond our understanding. It emphasizes the absolute wonder of what God has

planned for us. He is the only one who can make promises like this and make them come to fruition. Think of it! I am a human being, and my life is being guided. It is under the care of a God who has that ability and has made those kinds of promises. I cannot think of anything more wonderful than that which has been written on my behalf. It has been written for each one of us who is Christ's child. This will never be changed.

How wonderful that God has put His words into our possession. God has written it out for us to read. We can look at it and be comforted. It is Almighty God who will make certain that this is carried out. What a promise! Every time we study the Bible very carefully, we always find that it is far beyond anything we could think about. It is way greater and more wonderful than what we know. And we know it will be carried out because Christ is God.

God does give us a very interesting reason for these promises, which the world does not know anything about: "...**that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.**" The true believers are going to see the glory of God. This is all part of God's plan. It will occur because this is one of the ways in which God is making certain that we will be eyewitnesses of the tremendous glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. We will see His glory; we will see that He has done all that He promises that He would do. There is not the slightest doubt that we will be living with Him in eternity in a wonderful world that is called Heaven.

In our study of John 17, we have come to the last two verses in this chapter. These words are the closing of Jesus' prayer to His Heavenly Father, this very unique prayer we have been studying. It shows the remarkable intimacy between Christ and His Father, just before He went to the cross.

We read in verse 25:

**O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me.**

This statement already is disclosing very important information. The world does not know God the Father or Christ as He is the Messiah, or as He came as the Savior, or anything important about Him. We have to look carefully in the Bible to discover real truth, and we have been learning some very important spiritual lessons.

There is no question at all that we know that the world really does not understand Christ at all. Here Christ is speaking to His Heavenly Father, for our benefit. He emphasizes, "**O righteous Father.**" He is



speaking to the most righteous personality that one could imagine. Christ is reassuring us that God is always righteous. The world does not know that because it is completely separate from Christ.

Now verse 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.**

The name is everything: it tells us exactly who Christ is, and how He relates to the disciples. He is the Lord, and the disciples are His people that He rules over. We see here one of the important declarations as Christ is heading for the cross. He is doing it on our behalf, in order that we will have a more clear understanding of what Christ has done for us. We are learning more and more about the intimate relationship, not only between Christ and His Heavenly Father, but also between Christ and all His followers that He is concerned about.

The minute Christ uses the language "Thy name" we begin to understand the supreme importance of Christ and the intimate relationship between Himself and the Father. He is the Savior; He is the Son of God; He is the first-born; He is Christ. This tells us that Christ is everything; He is Eternal God. He is everything necessary for salvation. When we go to Christ in our thinking or in our prayers, we are going to Eternal God Himself. What could be better than that?

The love that God has will become a part of the love that goes out to every believer who has put his trust in the Lord Jesus. We will know the love of Christ. Nothing could be more wonderful for any one of us than to know we are under the matchless love of our Savior.

What a wonderful relationship that is eternal in character. He is talking about you and me, if we are His children. The love that God has for Christ Himself, the Son of God, will also be in us. There are no conditions of any kind; it will be because God has so declared: "**And I in them.**" Christ is really an integral part of the true believers. The love of Christ is so magnificent. We read it, but we cannot really understand such love or the fact that we have an intimate relationship with God.

When we pray we are speaking to our Heavenly Father, and we know absolutely that He hears our prayers and will take action over our prayers. We never have to wonder if Christ is still on our side, still present, or still watching over me. The answer is always that He absolutely is; Christ will never leave us or forsake us. So we are not only followers of the Lord Jesus, but we are intimately, eternally identified with the Lord Jesus.

That can never be broken. Christ has saved us so that we are His forevermore.

We really do not have a clear insight about how wonderful it is for Christ to be our Savior, but we can begin to get a little more understanding that it is a tremendous relationship. Any words we speak about being His child are true, and will be true until He takes us to Heaven. What a wonderful Savior He is! All we need to know is that Christ is with us and will never abandon us. He is absolutely trustworthy in everything He has ever said.

It is indeed wonderful to know this information from the Bible, and to know these words are true. When we go to mankind to find truth we wonder if we have heard truth or not. Usually we have not heard truth, because people do not really know truth. But Jesus is real. What a wonderful situation God has provided for us! This is what we want to think about: we are so thankful Christ is our Savior. He is everything that the Bible says He is. There is no limitation, and we are so undeserving, but we know it is true. It is such a comfort to us day by day, all the way to the end of our lives.



