

# † The Heart of Christ – the message of the Upper Room Discourse (John 13-17)

“...having loved His own who were in the world, He love them to the end”(John 13:1.)

## **The Praying Savior – John 17**

### **The Lessons from Jesus' Prayer – John 17:1-26**

#### **Appreciating the Precious Promise of God's Preservation**

##### **John 17:11-12**

**11 I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. 12 While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.**

We have much to cover in our text this morning so let us read the text and by the aid of the Spirit of God see the truths He would have for us. [Read Text].

The theme of these verses is the preserving power of God in our salvation and from our text I would offer you the following key point; that if we are to appreciate the precious promise of God's preservation and protection of His people, we must know three things; first, we must know...

#### **I. Our Position (John 17:11)**

*I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You.*

In this part of the prayer, we see our Lord Jesus outline both His own position as well as the position of believers in relation to the world.

#### **A. The position of Jesus (John 17:11a)**

*I am no longer in the world...*

Jesus makes this statement; ***I am no longer in the world.*** At first glance this might seem a bit confusing, for Jesus is clearly with His disciples, just hours from the cross, so how can He say that He is ***no longer in the world?*** It is important that we understand what this means if we are to rightly understand the next statement of Jesus.

Let us remember that the use of the word “world” in this prayer is not speaking of the earth or even all the people on the earth. Rather, it speaks of a way of thinking that is ambivalent or outright antagonistic to the ways and will of God. The thinking and philosophy of the world is to minimize or discount the power and presence of God and that is why the music and movies; politics and science of the world, along with other forms of conveying thoughts and so-called truth conspire, sometimes directly, often times indirectly, to undermine or speak against God. All this world's thinking becomes an enormous source of influence that seeks to manipulate and sway people's hearts into conformity. Conformity with the world's thinking does not mean that all people will think alike; not all must be democrats or republicans; liberals or conservatives; communists or capitalists. No, the common denominator for the world's thinking and influence is as I said, to simply minimize or better yet eliminate any thinking that is based or fully influenced by God's way and will.

With this understanding we get a good idea of what Jesus means as He says in effect, “I am no longer subject or tempted to be influenced by the thinking and false views of this world.” Jesus has walked among men. He had been tempted by the devil at the beginning of His ministry; as the devil sought to influence Him by not following the will of God, to which Jesus said in Matthew 4:10,

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**Go, Satan! For it is written, “YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.”**

And in John 7 we learn about a time when Jesus’ own brothers, who did not believe in Him, challenged Him to reveal Himself, thinking that if Jesus was truly who He said He was, the Messiah, God come in the flesh, that He ought to make Himself known. Listen to the scoffing statement of the Lord’s half-brothers as found in John 7:3-4;

**3 Therefore His brothers said to Him, “Leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. 4 For no one does anything in secret when he himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show Yourself to the world.”**

And the response of Jesus was not be influenced by this worldly way of thinking but rather He says, in verse 6,

**My time [the time appointed by the Father’s will] is not yet here, but your time is always opportune.**

In other words, Jesus would not be influenced by the world and its thinking, whether it came via demonic attack or by those closest to him. Jesus had been subject to such attacks and such thinking particularly over the past 3 ½ years of His life, and never of course giving in to such thinking. But now, as He approached the cross, He could say that He was not subject to the world’s thinking. This was the position of Jesus.

## **B. The position of believers (John 17:11b)**

*and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You...*

But the position of believers is quite different from that of Jesus. Jesus clearly says that believers **themselves are in the world**. To be in the world then is to be exposed, to be subject to and potentially influenced by the thinking and behavior of the world. Jesus knows all the temptations that His disciples will face. He knows every trick and scheme the devil and his minions will employ against you. He knows every persuasive and smooth speech that the world will entice you with to move away from God. Beloved, Jesus knows and reveals to us here, that left to ourselves, if left to our own tendency; if we were not kept, protected and preserved by the power of God, we would all soon fall away.

And in effect then, Jesus reminds us of our position; we are “in the world” and therefore prone to be influenced by the world and its thinking. But do not think this a grievous position. Do not think this to be a bad thing; to be exposed and prone to the thinking of the world. Why do I say this? Because I believe that it is only those who know their position; who know their fragile condition; who are aware of their frailties, their deficiencies; their weakness and their great needs who then become properly and increasingly dependent upon God to strengthen their resolves to say no to ungodliness and worldly desires (Titus 2:12). Beloved, the more we understand our position as “in the world” – the more dependent we become upon God. The more we comprehend that this world is against us, or as Jesus says a few verses later, that this world hates us and that we have a great spiritual antagonist in the devil, the more we realize our need

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for the protecting and preserving power of God in our lives and the truth that if God does not stand for us, we would be no means stand.

The sad truth is that many of us are content not being aware of our position in this world. Too many times professing believers are content with the concept of a future salvation to be realized “out there” some time and fail to see the dangers and conflicts that threaten their souls on a daily basis.

This past week, the youth group was taught from 2 Samuel 22, which is a quotation of Psalm 18, a Psalm of David, written as David realized that the only reason he was still living to write the words of this psalm was because of the gracious hand of God to protect him all his years from brutal and violent men. Did David need to be saved from physical enemies? Yes, from his encounter with Goliath, the giant of Gath, through the threats of Saul, his father-in-law and the father of his best friend; to some of his own men and even his own sons wanting to take his life, David needed salvation. And who did David trust to secure him, to keep him? Surely David was a mighty warrior, but listen to whom David ascribes his salvation as I read Psalm 18:1-3;

***1 I love You, O Lord, my strength. 2 The LORD is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. 3 I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.***

Now then, if David could not deliver himself or save himself from the hands of men, men who in the sight of God are accounted as nothing, who are you, O man, to think for a moment that you can save yourself, or keep yourself from the soul-damning effects of sin? For sin is an enemy of every soul and an enemy of greater power and greater influence than a whole army of Goliaths. Sin is fiercer than the rage of a 10,000 Sauls. And sin is more deceitful than the betrayal of a 1000 sons.

Beloved, David needed salvation daily. He needed deliverance daily. And too often, professing Christians speak of eternal life as being only something of the future. But eternal life for the believer is now. Salvation is now as every day we need deliverance from the devastating effects and power of sin. Woe to the one who does not see his need for salvation right now. For the truth is that eternal life and salvation are not simply about the future; it is not something I am waiting for. Now, today is the time to experience the protecting power of God; that you need daily to be kept from evil. Is this not what we read in the “disciples’ prayer” of Matthew 6:9-13

***9 Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.***

If we are not daily kept from evil, if we were ever left to ourselves, we would fall, fail and fumble every time. I don’t want to be a spiritual fumbler. I want to be known as faithful; but I need to know that I cannot be faithful if I am left “in the world” without the keeping, protecting, preserving power of God. This is my position then, one who is dependent upon the preserving power of God. The more I come to appreciate that, the more I can love the Lord and live for Him.

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But in addition then to knowing our position, if we are to appreciate the precious promise of God’s preservation and protection of His people, we must also know...

## II. Our Protector (John 17:11-12)

As Jesus prays in these verses, we come to learn something remarkable; not only a precious promise, but also the precious truth of the meaning and extent of what we sometimes call the doctrine of eternal security or what the Reformers called “perseverance of the saints.” Sometimes the teaching of eternal security is summarized in the phrase, “Once saved always saved.” While this is a true statement, it is ambiguous enough to allow some to believe that just because someone has prayed a prayer or walk an aisle in order to “be saved” – that one’s lifestyle or behavior after that event has no bearing on his or her salvation. In other words, Jesus supposedly saves people without transforming them; without fitting them for heaven and so long as the verbal profession has been made, one’s practice does not matter. Yet nothing can be further from the truth. I do whole heartedly affirm the teaching of Scripture that all those whom God saves are eternally secure, that is, God will bring them through sanctification to glorification. Scripture teaches that all those whom God saves, God will transform and that transformation will result in godly character and behavior.

This is what we find Jesus making reference to in this prayer; that God Himself is the protector; the keeper and guarder of all whom He saves and that these will be preserved until the end. Now, I’ve been careful to say “God” – God is the preserver and protector. But as we see here in our text, at least two persons of the Godhead, namely the Father and the Son, are said to be involved in this protecting process. I would like to start with what Jesus said about Himself in this process, working backwards. Jesus begins by asking the Father to do something for Him that He was doing first, so I want to start with that. So I want to start in verse 12 and see first Jesus as our protector.

### A. Jesus, our Protector (John 17:12)

*While I was with them, I was keeping them...and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.*

Let us just work our way through the text. Jesus says, **While I was with them...**, that is, while I was here on the earth, teaching them and showing them who God is, **I was keeping them...and I guarded them.** We need to understand these two words to more adequately appreciate the promise of God’s preserving us; keep and guard. These words are similar and yet each have an important distinction. Jesus first speaks of “keeping” His disciples. The idea behind “keeping” is the work of a shepherd who keeps His eyes on His flock. He observes them and knows where they are and what they need. As Jesus “keeps” His own, the idea is that Jesus had supplied His followers everything they needed to follow Him. I would like you to think of “keeping” as Jesus supplying to us everything in which we are in ourselves deficient so that we might persevere in the faith. In this sense, Jesus protects us from ourselves, for again, if left to ourselves, we would certainly fall away.

But not only did Jesus say He was keeping them, but He also guarded them. The word “guarded” is used extensively in the New Testament. The apostle John, who recorded these words of Jesus in John 17, ended his first letter, in 5:21 with the exhortation, **“Little children, guard yourselves from idols.”** I believe the point there in 1 John and here in our text is there are things outside of the believer that seek to threaten or harm him. In 1 John 5:21, believers are called to be on guard, to be watchful for such things. But even when we can’t be on guard for all

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that would threaten us, we are comforted with the truth in John 17:12 that God, as seen in the person of Jesus, guards; defends, protects His own.

And Jesus reminds us that this protection, this keeping and guarding is only for those whom the Father had given Him, for He keeps all save for the son of perdition, a reference to Judas, whom Jesus knew from the beginning was not one of his, but rather was a devil, an evil one, meant to fulfill the purpose and plan of God as revealed in the Scripture. I am so glad that we are told that Judas was not of those whom God had given Jesus to redeem, for if he had been given to Jesus, then Jesus would have to be seen as having failed. We would have to say that Jesus mostly saves; that He kept 11 out of 12 and that's not too bad, right? How many of you would like to base the assurance of your salvation on odds like that? Sure, 11 out of 12 is great if you are playing baseball? But how many of you would want to get on a jet and hear the pilot say, "Welcome aboard! And by the way, eleven out of every twelve of you will make it to your destination" Or equally as bad, to see a sign at the airport that informed you that one out of every twelve planes that take off will crash. I would want to fly. Jesus doesn't mostly save, He completely saves all given to Him. What a precious promise of God's preserving and protecting us in the person of Jesus.

## **B. The Father, our Protector (John 17:11b)**

*Holy Father, keep them...*

But now let us go back up to verse 11 and notice the request of Jesus. After stating that He was leaving the world and its influence and that the disciple would yet be under such influence, Jesus say, "I come to You..." Jesus has a request to make of the Father saying in effect, "Since I am leaving this world by way of the cross, there will be a time in which I cannot keep and protect these whom You have given Me to redeem. And so, Father, I bring them to You. In the middle of verse 11 we find a great exchange, a transfer of responsibilities. Jesus, from the beginning of time, before the foundations of the earth, had been given a people to redeem. And from the creation of Adam, through Abraham and Moses, through the Kings and the prophets, even up until this moment in time before the cross, Jesus had kept and guarded His own. But now He needs the Father to keep them and so He prays, ***Holy Father, keep them...*** "Keep them safe; guard their souls from the evil one even as I have. As I go to the cross to secure their ultimate salvation, do not let them succumb to the influences of the world and the attacks of the evil one. Jesus says so much in verse 15, ***"I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil [one]."*** The point is that there will never be a time; whether it be at the darkest time in all of human history as the crucifixion of the Son of God, or even in the seemingly most dark hour of any believer's life, that he will not be protected, kept, guarded and preserved by the hand of God.

This teaching of Jesus here in the form of His prayer corresponds with what we read of Jesus over in John 10:27-30

***27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.***

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Beloved, this is eternal security, to know that if you have been redeemed that your protector is God and no one is able to snatch you out of God's hand. It is interesting and important to note that while not mentioned by Jesus here, the Scriptures also teach us that God the Holy Spirit also participates in this role as our protector and preserver. In Ephesians 1:13-14 we read,

**13 In Him [Jesus], you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.**

Beloved, God is actively and purposefully keeping each and everyone of His children. To water down this doctrine of eternal preservation as being God's trying to hang on to us as best as He can, hoping that He can get us to heaven is not only demeaning to God and the Scriptures, but it would rob us of the steadfastness needed to face the hostilities of the world; making us uncertain if God is able and or willing to see us safely through. But as many of you already know, the Scriptures give us this joyful, truthful encouragement in Philippians 1:6

**For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.**

We have seen that knowing our position and knowing our protector will bring us joy and assurance. Finally then, if we are to appreciate the precious promise of God's preservation and protection of His people, we must also know...

### III. Our Provision

Believers in Jesus Christ have two precious provisions as seen in our text; two provisions that explain to us how we are kept by God.

#### A. The name of God (John 17:11b-12a)

*Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me... While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me*

The first great provision is found in both verses 11 and 12. Again Jesus says, **Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me... While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me...**

Let us remember what is meant by this phrase “**in Your name.**” To invoke one's name was to make reference to that person's whole person, character, and nature. When we spoke back in John 14 of praying in the name of Jesus, we concluded that our prayers are to not only be consistent with those things for which Jesus would have us pray – praying like Jesus prays, but also then in reference to His work on the cross, which makes our prayer life to God possible. To pray in Jesus' name it to pray in a manner consistent with His word and purpose.

In John 17:6, Jesus had already said that He had manifested the name of the Father to His disciples. Jesus had made the character and purpose of the Father known. He showed them who God is and what He is like. And as the disciples saw the holiness of God in comparison to their own ungodliness; the life of God in contrast to their own spiritual death, they came to desire life with God as provided by Jesus. This was all wrapped up in the idea of the name of God.

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To be kept in the name of God then is to be kept by all who God is; to be kept by His power, not your own; to be kept by His working in us and through us. To be kept by the name of God reminds us that we cannot be kept because of anyone else’s ability or character for there is none other that can save. To be kept in the name of God is ultimately to understand oneself as a helpless sinner, unable to save himself but to realize that He worked on our behalf through Jesus. To be kept in the name of God is to know the only true God as Almighty, Sovereign, Faithful, Able and willing to save and keep us. And the assurance of anyone’s salvation, if they have truly been brought into a life transforming relationship with Jesus, is bound up in this one and simple truth; either God saves us completely and entirely by the working of His own will and power or He does not save at all. As we sing in the hymn, “Rock of Ages” –

***Not the labor of my hands  
Can fulfill Thy law’s demands;  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears forever flow,  
All for sin could not atone;  
Thou must save, and Thou alone.***

## **B. The unity of God (John 17:11c)**

*...that they may be one even as We are.*

In addition to this provision of being kept in the name of God, we are also told that we are kept in order to make us one with God; we see the unity of God. In other words, as we are kept in the name of God, this results in the blessing of being brought into right relation or in oneness with God. As we read the words of Jesus at the end of verse 11, ***that they may be one even as We are.***

We are reminded that we cannot be one with God, we cannot be right with God; we cannot experience true communion with God; and we cannot have peace with God unless brings us to such peace; to this state of reconciliation, by the blood of His Son Jesus Christ. As the Puritan preacher, George Newton so aptly stated, *“There is no possibility of having peace, unless God Himself bestow it; unless He bow the heavens and come down, and work in the hearts of His people. It is beyond the power of any creature to keep the saints themselves in unity and peace, unless God Himself does it.”*

Consider the magnitude of this? For are not we, who confess Jesus as Lord and even give evidence of the working of His Spirit in us, yet full of pride and selfishness and often find ourselves at odds with one another. If God did not reach down with the healing salve of His mercy; and reminds us of our stubborn tendencies and grant us divine grace to pursue growing in love and fellowship with one another and with Himself; we would surely, however slowly, destroy ourselves. If God did not bless us with His working in us, we would never desire to work for Him. Philippians 2:13 so states, ***“for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”***

Thus we see, that from beginning to end, from the first decree of God to redeem mankind by the Father’s choosing, the Son’s redeeming and the Spirit’s setting us apart for salvation – there is no salvation. If we are to appreciate the precious promise of God’s preserving and protection power in our lives, if we want to truly comprehend the wonder of eternal security, we learn that it is the work of God; a work that starts in Him and ends in Him but by His grace it also includes there in the middle our responsibility to respond and live in light of such a work. May we

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see anew our position; as totally needful for God's work. May we see anew our Protector; God Himself as Father, Son and Spirit all do the work to preserve us in Him. And may we see anew our provisions; the knowledge of God in His nature and Person; being kept in His name; and the provision of unity with God and with one another so long as we walk in light; even as 1 John 1:6-7 reminds us,

**6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.**

This is true eternal security. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria*

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