

Exposition of the Gospel of John CHAPTER 58

CHRIST INTERCEDING (CONTINUED)

by A.W. Pink

Transcript

Exposition of the Gospel of John

CHAPTER 58

CHRIST INTERCEDING (CONTINUED)

John 17:6-12

The following is an Analysis of the second section of John 17: — 1. What Christ had done for God's elect, verse 6. 2. The response of the elect, verses 6, 7. 3. The consequent assurance of the elect, verse 8. 4. The elect alone prayed for by the Mediator, verse 9. 5. Reasons why Christ prayed for the elect, verses 9-11. 6. Christ praying for their preservation and unity verse 11. 7. Christ's accompanying plea, verse 12. John 17 is the sequel to chapter 13. In each the actions of our great High Priest are in view. But the services are different, both together giving us a full representation of our Advocate on high. In the 13th chapter He had, as it were, laid one hand on the defiled feet of His saints; here He lays the other hand on the throne of the Father, forming thus a chain of marvellous workmanship reaching from God to sinners. In the 13th chapter His body was girt, and He was stooping down towards our feet; here, His eyes are lifted up (John 17:1), and He is looking in the face of the Father. What that is asked for us, by One who fills up the whole distance between the bright throne of God and our defiled feet, can be denied? All must be granted—such an One is heard always. Thus we get the sufficiency and acceptability of the Advocate" (Mr. J. G. Bellett). That order in which the Savior here presents His petitions, and the pleas by which He urges them, are deserving of the closest notice. The prayer has three main divisions: in John 17:1 to 5 He prays for Himself; in John 17:6 to 19 He prays for the disciples then alive: in John 17:20 to 26 He prays for those who should believe. In praying for Himself, His own glorification, the great end in view is the Father's glory. In John 17:1 He says: "glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee," and in John 17:5 He adds: "glorify thou me with thine own self." This, be it noted, is before He asks a single thing for His people. Just as in The disciples' prayer, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name" was the opening petition, so here in "The Lord's Prayer" the Father's interests come first. Inseparably connected are the two things: the Father's glory and the Son's glory. In praying for Himself before His people He shows us that in all things He has the pre-eminence (Col. 1:18). In studying the different pleas for His own glorification, we find that they were seven in number, and this supplies us with the first of a most striking series of sevens which runs through this prayer. The various pleas were as follows: First, because of His

filial relationship with God—"Father," John 17:1. Second, because the appointed time for it had arrived—"The hour is come," John 17:1. Third, because authority over all flesh had been given Him by Divine appointment and promise, John 17:2. Fourth, because His bestowal of eternal life on God's elect had also been promised Him, John 17:2. Fifth, because in bestowing eternal life on the elect He would be bringing them to a knowledge of the Father, John 17:3. Sixth, because He had glorified the Father on the earth, John 17:4. Seventh, because He had finished the work which had been given Him to do, John 17:4. For these reasons He asks that His request be granted. Ere passing from the first section of this prayer, attention should be called to the lovely manner in which the Son there kept before Him the glory of the Father. First, He had said: "Father... glorify thy Son" (17:1), not "the Son": He desired no glory for Himself apart from the Father! Second, "that thy Son also may glorify thee" (John 17:1): not separately, but in perfect union. Third, "As thou hast given him power over all flesh" (John 17:2): blessed is it to see the place which He gives the Father. Fourth, "that he should give eternal life to as many as"—He redeems with His blood? No; but—"to as many as thou hast given him" (John 17:3)! Thus, again, does He refer all to the Father. Fifth, "And this is life eternal that they might know me"? No; but—"that they might know thee, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3). Sixth, "I have finished the work which thou hast given me to do" (John 17:4): nothing was done for self. He ascribes honor to the Father for originating and appointing that work! Finally, when He prays to be glorified, it is touching to see how He puts it: "glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had before the world was", No, no; but instead "with the glory which I had with thee before the world was": not for a moment would He dissociate His own glory from His Father! Truly is this altogether Lovely One "fairer than the children of men." We have now completed the first main section of John 17, verses 1-5, where Christ is seen praying for Himself. In the second section, verses 6-19, He prays for the living disciples. This second section is also subdivided into two parts, though it is not easy to classify them. In verses 6 to 12 the fundamental reason is brought out as to why the Savior prays for His disciples and not for the world—because of their relation to Himself. Out of this grows the petition for their preservation—the essence of all intercession. In verses 13 to 19 the Lord prays for His disciples as left here in the world, presenting their several needs as growing out of this. We shall confine ourselves now to the first subdivision. While this prayer resolves itself into three divisions there is a most striking apparent unity about it. The substance of Christ's prayer for Himself is: Place Me in circumstances in which I may glorify Thee in the salvation of men. The substance of His prayer for the disciples is: Fit them for glorifying Thee in promoting the salvation of men, through prosecuting the work to which I have called them as My instrumental agents. The substance of His prayer for the whole company of the redeemed (John 17:20-26) is: Bring them to entire conformity to Thyself in mind, will and enjoyment, that Thou mayest be glorified to the uttermost by their being saved to the uttermost. Thus the glory of the Father is the paramount consideration from the beginning to the end. A close study of the details will fully bear this out. But though everything is subordinated by Christ to the Divine glory, yet the blessings asked for the apostles and the whole company of the redeemed are viewed not only in reference to the glory of the Father directly, but to the glory of the Son, in whom and by whom the Father was to be glorified. The plea for blessing them is that "I am glorified in them" (John 17:10), and the ultimate design is "that they may behold my glory" (John 17:24). "The prayer of our Lord for His apostles, like the prayer for Himself, comprehends both petition and pleading. He asks blessings for them, and He states the grounds on which He asks these blessings for them. The transition at the beginning of the sixth verse is similar to that at the twentieth verse, though not so distinctly defined. There He says, 'I pray not for them alone,' i.e., the apostles (rather the entire company of disciples at that time, A.W.P.), 'but for them also which shall believe in me through their word.' Here He in effect says, 'I pray not for myself alone, but for the men to whom I have manifested thy name.' "The great blessing which our Lord asks for the apostles is that they may be

one, as the Father and the Son are; that is, that they may be united with Them as to mind and will, and aim and operation in the great work of glorifying God in the salvation of men. That is the ultimate object of His desire in reference to them; the other petitions are for what is necessary in order to this. The blessings necessary to the obtaining of this blessing are two: First, Conservation—"Keep them through, or in, or in reference to, thine own name"; 'Keep them from the evil one or the evil thing that is in the world, that they may be one, as we are.' Then, second, Consecration—"Sanctify them through, or in reference to, thine own name"; all the rest is occupied with pleadings—most powerful and appropriate pleadings" (Mr. John Brown). While it is true that in John 17:6 to 19 the Lord is praying directly and immediately for His apostles, it is clear to us that they are here viewed, as in the preceding chapters, in a representative character. Were this not the case, there would be no place at all in this prayer for all the others of His believing disciples at that time, for John 17:20 speaks only of those who were to believe at a later date. The careful student will note that Christ was most particular to describe the ones He here intercedes for in terms which are common to all believers. It is with this understanding that we shall now proceed with our exposition. "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" (John 17:6). Four things are to be carefully noted in this and the following verses: the persons for whom Christ intercedes; the characters in which they are presented; the petitions offered on their behalf; and the particular pleas by which each separate petition is urged. It is to be noted that the Lord did not begin by asking for the blessing of His disciples; rather did He first describe the ones he was about to pray for: in John 17:6 to 10 it is presentation, in John 17:11 and 12 it is supplication. It is beautiful to see that as the Savior here comes before the Father as intercessor, He presents "His own" along with Himself. It reminds us of His word, spoken long before by the spirit of prophecy, "Behold I and the children whom the Lord hath given me" (Isa. 8:18, quoted in Hebrews 2:13). It was the fulfillment of what had been so strikingly foreshadowed by the high priest of Israel: "And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually" (Ex. 28:29). So here, when our great High Priest entered the presence of the Father, He bore our names on His heart before Him! That which made this possible was His own glorification, consequent upon His "finished work" (John 17:4, 5). "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world." Here is the first proof that the Lord had more than the eleven apostles in view. He designedly employed language that was strictly applicable to all His believing people at that time. During His earthly life He had made known the Father's name to far more than the Eleven. 1 Corinthians 15:6 speaks of the risen Savior being seen by "over five hundred brethren at once." So, too, far more than the apostles had been given to Christ out of the world; and again, a larger company than the apostles had "kept his word." Three things were here mentioned by Christ to recommend to the Father these objects of His petition: they were acquainted with the Father's name; they were the subjects of His distinguishing grace; they were obedient to His will. Thus the Lord Jesus spoke of what He had done, what the Father had done, and what the disciples had done. "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world." Herein Christ fulfilled that prophecy, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee" (Ps. 22:22). To make known the Father's name was to reveal Him, manifest His character, display His perfections. As we are told at the beginning of this Gospel, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." The Son alone was competent for this. Christ had manifested the Father's perfections in His perfect life, wondrous miracles and sublime teaching. But only those who had been given Him by the Father were able to receive this manifestation. Christ has made known the Father to all the elect: "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father" (1 John 2:13). So perfectly did Christ discharge this office that He could say, "He that hath

seen me hath seen the Father" (John 12:9). "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." All creatures belong to the Father by creation (Heb. 12:9), but this is not what is here in view. Christ is speaking of a special company which had been given to Him. The reference, then, is to the sovereign election of God, whereby He chose a definite number to be His "peculiar people" —His in a peculiar or special way. These were eternally His: "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4); and by the immutability of His purpose of grace from John 11:29, they are always His. This plea was made by Christ to the Father not only for the urging of the petition which followed, but for the comfort of the disciples. Despised by Israel they might be, hated by men in general, the special objects of Satan's enmity; yet were they the peculiar favourites of God. Again, this plea of Christ's affords us instruction in prayer. The more we discern the Father's interests in us, the greater our confidence when we come to Him a prayer. What assurance would be ours if, when we approached the throne of grace, we realized that the Father's heart had been set upon us from the beginning of all things! "And thou gavest them me." Thine by foreordination; Mine by special donation. "The acts of the three persons of the Trinity are commensurate; of the same sphere and latitude; those whom the Father chooseth, the Son redeemeth and the Spirit quickeneth. The Father loveth none but those which are given to Christ, and Christ taketh charge of none but those that are loved by the Father. Your election will be known by your interest in Christ, and your interest in Christ by the regeneration of the Spirit. All God's flock are put into Christ's hands, and He leaveth them in the care of the Spirit: 'Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ' (1 Pet. 1:2). There is a chain of salvation; the beginning is from the Father, the dispensation through the Son, the application by the Spirit; all cometh from the Father, and is conveyed to us through Christ by the Spirit" (Mr. Thos. Manton). "Thou gavest them me." The elect are given to Christ, first by way of reward: "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed... He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong" (Isa. 53:10-12.) "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen tot thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Ps. 2:8). The elect were given to Christ, secondly, by the way of charge. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out [reject]... And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John 6:37, 39). The elect were intrusted to Christ to take care of. Thus the faithfulness of Christ to the Father is engaged on our behalf. If a single one of God's elect were to perish, the glory of the perfect Servant would be tarnished for all eternity. How absolute, then, is our security! "And they have kept thy word." The last reference, no doubt, is to God's call, which went forth through Christ. When these disciples heard that word of command, they rose up, left all, and followed Him. Moreover, they had continued with Him. When many "went back and walked no more with him," the Savior said unto the Twelve, "Will ye also go away?" Their answer, through Peter, was prompt and unwavering: To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:66-68); contrast verse 38. The Lord spoke here absolutely from the standpoint of their faith, no notice being taken of their failures to apprehend that Word. How beautiful, how blessed, to see our great High Priest, notwithstanding the feebleness of their faith and their frequent unbelief, presenting the disciples before the Father according to the perfections of His own love—that love which "imputeth no evil" (1 Cor. 13:5). They had kept the Father's word, but O how imperfectly. But love notices not their defects, dwelling only upon their truth, submission and obedience! Satan is an accuser, and even speaks evil of believers; but Christ, our Advocate, takes our part, and ever speaks well of us. Thus is the highest commendation Christ can give His people: "They have kept thy word." "Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee" (John 17:7). The

Lord continues to speak in commendatory terms of His disciples. "These are wonderful words when we consider the character of the eleven men to whom they were applied. How weak was their faith! How slender their knowledge! How shallow their spiritual attainments! How faint their hearts in the hour of danger! Yet a very little while after Jesus spoke these words they all forsook Him and fled, and one of them denied Him with an oath. No one, in short, can read the four Gospels with attention and fail to see that never had a great Master such weak servants as Jesus had in the eleven apostles. Yet these very servants were the men of whom the gracious Head of the church speaks here in high and honorable terms. The lesson before us is full of comfort and instruction. It is evident that the Lord sees far more in His believing people than they see in themselves, or than others see in them. The least degree of faith is very precious in His sight. Though it be no larger than a grain of mustard seed, it is a plant of heavenly growth, and makes a boundless difference between the possessors of it and the men of the world. The eleven apostles were weak and unstable as water; but they believed and loved their Master when millions refused to own Him. And the language of Him who declared that a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple should not lose its reward, shows plainly that their constancy was not forgotten" (Bishop Ryle). It is blessed to note the characters in which Christ here presents the disciples to His Father. "It is most comforting to find that all these glorious desires for the saints our Lord grounds simply on this: that they have received the Son's testimony about the Father, and had believed surely in the Father's love. How full of blessing it is to see that we are presented before God simply as believing that love! How surely does it tell us that the pleasure of our God is this: that we should know Him in love, know Him as the Father, know Him according to the words of Him who has come out from His bosom. This is joy and liberty. And it is indeed only as having seen God in love, seen the Father and heard the Father in Jesus, that makes us the family. It is not the graces that adorn us, or the services that we render, but simply that we know the Father. It is this which distinguishes the saint from the world, and gives him his standing, as here, in the presence of the Father" (Mr. J. G. Bellett). "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" (John 17:8). The "for" which here introduces what follows explains the all things in the previous verse. The disciples had entered, by grace, into that of which the world was completely ignorant, namely, that the Father was the source of all that was given to the Son. Some "wondered" at His words and works; others, in their enmity, blasphemously attributed them to Satan. Not only had the disciples learnt that He came out from the Father, but they had perceived that the means (the "words") of bringing them into such blessing were also of the Father. The Savior had treated them as "friends," committing to them those intimate communications of grace which the Father gave to Him, and this that they might know the Divine relationship into which His wondrous love had brought them. Nor had this been in vain. Slow of heart they truly were (as, alas! are we), yet they received the truth, and receiving it they knew that He was the Son of the Father's love. Thus does the Savior explain how souls are brought into such nearness to the Father. It is instructive to note the order here: "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." How this makes manifest the fact that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). How plain is the lesson here taught us! If our faith is to be strengthened, deepened and increased, it can only be by our diligent attention to, prayerful meditation upon, and personal appropriation of the words of God! So, too, knowledge, spiritual knowledge—discernment and understanding—is the fruit of "receiving" God's words. It is to be noted that the initial "receiving" has preceded it. The "believing" comes last here, though the Lord Jesus admits no other faith than that which is based upon an intelligent acquaintance with His person—cf. Romans 10:13. "I pray for them: I pray not for the world; but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine" (John

17:9). The world here is a general name for mankind in their fallen state. There is a "fashion of this world" (1 Cor. 7:31), a common mould, according to which the characters of men are formed. There "is a course of this world" (Eph. 2:2), in which all walk, except those who are on the narrow way" which leadeth unto life. All who have not been "transformed by the renewing of their minds" (Rom. 12:2) are, as a matter of course, "conformed to this world." For the unbelieving, Christ prayed not: "For whom He is the Propitiation, He is an Advocate; and for whom He died, He makes intercession, and for no others in a spiritual saving way." (Mr. John Gill). "I pray not for the world." But how is this to be harmonized with the fact that while He was on the Cross the Savior did pray for His enemies—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"? It is important that we should distinguish between the prayers of Christ as the perfect Man and the prayers of Christ as Mediator. There are several of the Psalms which plainly intimate that the Lord Jesus prayed for His foes, but this was to show us that as a perfect Man, subject to that holy law which required each one to love his neighbor as himself, He harboured no revenge. He prayed for the ungodly in answer to His human duty, but not officially as the Mediator. So He taught His disciples, "Love your enemies, bless them which curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). But here in John 17 Christ is seen as the great High Priest, therefore He prays only for "His own." "But for them which thou hast given me." How this should bow our hearts in adoring worship! What thanksgivings it calls for! Oh what an inestimable privilege to be one of the objects of Christ's intercession. Millions passed by unprayed for by Him; but those who belong to the "little flock" (Luke 12:32) are held up by Him before the throne of grace. One of the disciples asked Him, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" (John 14:22). So may we ask, "How is it that Thou wilt pray for us, and not for the world?" Others more accomplished, with more pleasing dispositions, who daily put us to shame in many ways, left out, and we taken in! The finite mind, yea the renewed mind, can discover no answer. All that we can say is, it was the sovereign grace of the sovereign God who singled us out to be the objects of His distinguishing favors. Let the world call it selfishness in us if they will, but let us express in praise to God our profoundest gratitude, and seek to live as becometh His elect ones. Let us also follow the example of Christ here and manifest our greatest love for those who have been chosen out of the world. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Gal. 6:10). But do Christ's words in John 17:9 forbid us to pray for the wicked? No, indeed. Christ's mediatorial acts as our great High Priest are not our standard of conduct; but in His walk as the perfect Man He has left us "an example." On the Cross He prayed for His enemies. So we are commanded to pray for our enemies; and it is our duty to pray for all men. See Romans 10:1; 1 Timothy 2:1. "For they are thine." In the previous verses the Savior had described the characters of those for whom He was about to intercede, now He presents the reasons why He prayed for them. The first is, "for they are thine." Though given to the Mediator by grant—both as a reward and as a charge—they are still the Father's; that is, He has not relinquished His right and property over them. As a father who giveth his daughter in marriage to another does not lose his fatherly propriety, so those given to Christ are still the Father's "for they (in sharp contrast from 'the world') are thine" fixes the meaning of "thine they were" in John 17:6—"thine" not by creation, but by election. "The world" also belongs to the Father by creation! What a powerful plea was this; the ones for whom Christ was about to pray were the Father's, therefore, for His own glory and because of His affection for that which belonged to Him, He would keep them. "And all mine are thine, and thine are mine" (John 17:10). Here is the second motive for His request: the interests of the Father and the Son could not be separated; what belonged to the one belonged to the other. Indubitable proof of His absolute Deity; it is because the Savior is one with the Father that They have rights and interests no less boundless than common. The Holy Spirit is not here mentioned, though He is certainly not to be excluded. As Mr. Manton well said, "They are the Father's

children, Christ's members, and the Spirit's temples." "And I am glorified in them" (John 17:10). This was His third plea. Since the Son was the supreme Object of the Father's affections, then this was another reason for Him preserving those in whom the Savior was glorified. What a place for us! To be the subjects of this mutual affection of the Father and the Son! The world knew Him not, Israel received Him not; but these disciples by their faith, love, and obedience, glorified Him; therefore did He make special intercession for them. And how immensely practical is this for us! The more we glorify Christ, the more confidence shall we have of His intercession for us—"Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:32). "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" (John 17:11). What a touching plea is this! The Savior reminds the Father that the disciples would be deprived of His personal care as present with them, and this would expose them the more to the world. He had been their Guide, their Guardian, their ever-present and all-sufficient Friend. And how He had borne with their infirmities, upheld them in weakness, protected them from evil! But now He was leaving them, going to the Father, and into His hands He now commits His own charge. "But these are in the world." God could take each saint to Heaven the very day he believed (as He did the dying thief) did He so please; but for reasons of His own He leaves them here for a shorter or longer season. He does so for His own wise purposes: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:15). He gets more glory by leaving us here. As a quaint old writer said, "It is more wonderful to maintain a candle in a bucket of water than in a lantern." God's power is made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). God sent Jacob and his family into Egypt that He might there exhibit before his descendants His mighty power on Pharaoh. We are left here that we might be tried: "Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:12). There is a measure of sufferings appointed (1 Thess. 3:3), and each of us must receive his share. Another reason why we are left in the world is to make us appreciate the more the coming glory. The roughness of our pilgrim path makes us yearn for rest; our present strangership deepens our desire to be at Home. "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." The term "holy" is here descriptive of character. The root meaning of the word is separation, and as applied to God it signifies that He is far removed from evil. But this is simply negative. God is not only elevated high above all impurity, but He is absolutely, essentially pure in Himself. That God is holy signifies that He is lifted high above all finite creatures. "Who shall not fear thee O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy" (Rev. 15:4). The titles of God in Scripture are suited to the requests made of Him: "Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace" (2 Thess. 3:16); "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another" (Rom. 15:5), where the apostle prays for brotherly forbearance among the saints. The connection in which the Savior here addresses "the holy Father" is striking. He was asking for the preservation and unification of His disciples, and He requests the Father to do this for them in strict accord with His holy nature. The Lord would have us know with whom we have to do; He would have us pray for an ever-deepening abhorrence of sin—"Ye that love the Lord, hate evil" (Ps. 97:10). "Keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me." How this brings out the value Christ sets upon us and the deep interest He has in us! About to return to the Father on high, He asks the Father that He will preserve those so dear to His heart, those for whom He bled and died. He hands them over to the care of the very One who had first given them to Him. It was as though He said: I know the Father's heart! He will take good care of them! And why was it, why is it, that we are so highly esteemed by Christ? Clearly not for any excellency which there is, intrinsically, in us. The answer must be, Because we are the Father's love gift to the Son. It is striking to observe that just seven times in this chapter Christ speaks of those whom the Father had "given" Him—see verses 2, 6 (twice) 9, 11, 12,

24. In John 3:16 we learn of the Father's love to us; here in John 17 we behold the Father's love to Christ. God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son; and He so loved His Son as to give Him a people who, conformed to His image, shall through all eternity, show forth His praises. Marvellous fact! We are the Father's love gift to His Son. Who then can estimate the value which Christ puts upon us! The worth of a gift depends upon the one who made it; its intrinsic value may be paltry, but when made by a loved one it is highly prized for his sake. So we, utterly unworthy in ourselves, are ever regarded by Christ in all the inestimable worth of that love of the Father which gave us to Him! Thus does the eye of our great High Priest ever look upon us with affection and delight. How this ought to endear Him to our hearts! Little wonder then, in view of what has just been before us, that the first thing the Savior asked for on behalf of those given to Him by the Father was their preservation. He was leaving them in a hostile world: "He asks that they may be kept from evil, from being overcome by temptation, from being crushed by persecution, from every device and assault of the Devil" (Bishop Ryle). But some find a difficulty here, why should Christ pray for their continuance in grace? Was not such a request meaningless, useless? Had He not affirmed that no sheep of His should ever perish! Ah, how futile for the finite mind to reason about spiritual and Divine things! But does Scripture throw any light on this apparently needless petition of Christ? Yes; it shows us, throughout, that God's decrees do not render void the use of means; yea, many of God's decrees are accomplished through the employment of instrumental agencies; and one of these chief means is prayer! It is the old nature, still in the Christian, which makes needful the intercession of Christ! "That they may be one, as we." This refers not to a manifestation of ecclesiastical oneness; rather is it a oneness of personal knowledge of and fellowship with the Father and the Son, and therefore oneness in spirit, affection, and aim. It is a oneness which is the outcome not of human agreement or effort, but of Divine power, through making each and all "partakers of the divine nature." Has this request of the Savior been granted? It has. In Acts 4:32 we read, "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." And is it not still true that among the real people of God, despite all their minor differences, there is still a real, a fundamental, and a blessed, underlying unity—they all believe God's Word is inspired, inerrant, of final authority; they all believe in the glorious person and rest upon the all-sufficient sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ; they all aim at the glory of God; they all pant for the time when they shall be forever with the Lord. "One as we" shows that the union here prayed for is a Divine, spiritual, intimate, invisible, unbreakable one! "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:12). "The Lord, then, in committing His own to the Father, whom in that name He was keeping whilst here, speaks of having kept them safe, save that one who was doomed to destruction. Awful lesson! that even the constant presence of Jesus fails to win where the Spirit brings not the truth home to the conscience. Does this enfeeble Scripture? On the contrary, the Scripture was thereby fulfilled. Chapter 13 referred to Judas that none should be stumbled by such an end of his ministry. Here it is rather that none should therefore doubt the Lord's care. He was not one of those given to Christ by the Father, though called to be an apostle; of those so given He had lost none. Judas was an apparent, not a real, exception, as he was not a child of God but the son of perdition. To see the awful end of so heartless a course would only give more force to His works of grace who, if He left the world for the Father, was bringing them into His own associations before the Father" (Bible Treasury). "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name; those that thou gavest me I have kept." None but a Divine person could "keep" them. He had preserved them from the machinations of the world, the flesh, and the devil. None had apostatized; all had "continued" with Him in the day of His humiliation (Luke 22:28). "And none of them is lost, but the son of perdition." Note carefully, He did not say, "except the son of perdition," rather, "but the son of perdition." He belonged not to "them," that is, to those who had been given Him by the

Father. The disjunctive participle is used here, as frequently in Scripture, to contrast those belonging to two different classes. Compare Matthew 12:4; Acts 27:22; Revelation 21:27. Not one of them given to Christ can or will be lost. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." "That the scripture might be fulfilled." The reference is to Psalms 41 and 109. The presence of the traitor among the apostles was one of the many proofs that the Lord Jesus was the promised Messiah. Four reasons may be suggested for Christ referring to Judas here. To show there was no failure in discharging the trust which the Father had committed to Him; to assure the disciples of this, so that their faith might not be staggered; to demonstrate that Christ had not been deceived by Judas; to declare God's hand and counsel in it—"that the scripture might be fulfilled." The following questions are to prepare the student for our next lesson: — 1. What is meant by "my joy fulfilled in themselves," verse 13? 2. What is meant by "they are not of the world," verse 14? 3. Why are believers left here in the world, verse 15? 4. Why the repetition of verse 14 in verse 16? 5. What is the "sanctification" of verse 17? 6. What is the meaning of verse 18? 7. How did Christ "sanctify himself," verse 19?

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-pink/exposition-of-the-gospel-of-john-chapter-58-christ-interceding-continued/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net