

In the Shadow of the Cross - Jesus Prays for His Disciples (1)

by J. Glyn Owen

Jesus, as the high priest, presents the credentials of his disciples to the Father, assures him of their legitimacy, and prays for their needs.

Duration: 1:11:13

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 13:1-17, John 17:1, John 17:24, Romans 8:34, Ephesians 3:12, Hebrews 7:25

Topics: "Disciples"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on Jesus' testimonial to the Father on behalf of his disciples. He emphasizes that the disciples have received and kept Christ's words as the word of God. Jesus affirms that they have believed in him as the one sent by the Father and have come to know certain truths about him. Despite their imperfections, Jesus testifies to his disciples and their future growth. The speaker also highlights the importance of staying committed to the teachings of Scripture and not adding personal ideas.

Transcript

It's a joy to have you with us again tonight, so many of you. And if my eyes tell me the truth, there are a number of friends among us who do not regularly worship with us, and we want you to know how happy we are to have you. We trust that the Lord Jesus Christ himself will bless you and bless us all together in accordance with his bountiful grace and his gracious promise.

Now we continue this evening with our theme which we have entitled, In the Shadow of the Cross. Those of you who have been with us over the last number of Sunday evenings will remember that we've been browsing over and meditating upon chapters 13, 14, 15, 16, and now we've come to chapter 17 in John's Gospel. Last Sunday evening we confined ourselves to the first and the last verses in the first section of this great high priestly prayer of our Lord, where we heard our Lord praying for himself, praying for glory.

First of all, glory during the course of his humiliation. It sounds contradictory, but as we saw on that occasion, that prayer was gloriously heard and answered, and our Lord was indeed glorified in the midst of his trials and anguish as he made his way to the cross. We move forward tonight, and we're going to take up the passage that begins with verse 6, where our Lord Jesus Christ now looks around at his band of disciples, the 11 of them particularly.

He could very well have been thinking of more than the 11, but he is particularly thinking of the 11, and he, as it were, puts his arms around them. I would like you to have this picture because I believe metaphorically it's exactly what he's doing. He puts his arms around them, and he carries them into the presence of the Father, and he bears their needs before the Father and pleads for them there.

I would like us to see here, as we indicated, I believe, last Lord's Day evening, I would like us to see here a picture of precisely what Jesus Christ is doing in the heavenlies tonight. I would like us to be able to see here a representation of his high priestly and intercessory ministry, the ministry that gives us life and grace from day to day in our very needs. And if we come to this passage, this whole chapter beginning with verse 6, where our Lord turns from his own particular personal needs to the needs of his disciples, I think we shall be greatly profited and blessed.

If there is one thing that you and I need to be assured of, it is to see the infallible intercessor who takes up your case and mine every day before the Father in the glory, and who prays for us. And whereas there are other precious things to be learned from this great chapter, this great prayer of our Lord's, this surely must be one of them, one of the most precious. It gives us a little window that opens into heaven itself, and it gives us some idea of the kind of ministry that our Lord now continues to exercise, shall I point, for you, for you, and for me.

Now, I had intentionally, shall I make a confession? I sometimes make confessions, and you're very generous. I had originally meant to preach three sermons on this. One last Sunday evening, one tonight, and to conclude the whole thing next Sunday evening.

Well, I can't do that. We have to stay with it a little while. Indeed, pressure has been brought upon me to do so, and I feel that I must for more reasons than one.

I have discovered in pastoral ministry over the last two or three weeks that perhaps this is very essential, a key to meet the needs of quite a number of our people, a number of whom are here tonight. Now then, let's come to the words before us, and you'll be greatly helped if you keep your open, because really what I want to do is just to try and elucidate what Scripture itself says, and not to add too much of my own ideas. Now, the first main division here I would speak of in these terms.

The high priest, first of all, presents the credentials of those for whom he is about to intercede. Let me repeat that. Jesus is carrying his people into the presence of the Father to pray for them.

As he brings them into the presence of the Father, he introduces them to the Father, and he introduces them to do one thing mainly. It is, as it were, to assure the Father the people I'm going to pray for are legitimate concerns for my intercession. I've every right to pray for these.

They need my prayer, but more than that, they are legitimate concerns for my prayers and intercessions in your holy presence. I would like you to look particularly at verses 6 and 8, and I'll be quoting from the New International. No, indeed, I'm going to be quoting tonight from the Revised Standard Version.

Now, don't ask me my reasons for that, but I am varying it, and I have my reasons tonight. John 17 verses 6 and 8. I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world. Thine they were, and thou gavest them to me, and they have kept thy word.

Now to verse 8. For I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and know in truth that I came from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. Now, let me repeat

them. I believe that the main thing that we have in those verses is this.

It's the high priest presenting the credentials of those for whom he is about to intercede. The whole approach of our Lord at this stage reflects a due sense of order and dignity. Now, I would like you to capture this.

It's something that has come home very, very forcibly to me. I have discovered that so many of my prayers, in private and possibly in public too, are disorderly, and show very little thought, little forethought. Now, there is room for this kind of spontaneous expression.

I'm sure there is. But what I want you to notice is this. Jesus was the Son of God, and he was God the Son.

And here in his prayers, there is absolutely nothing slipshod, as if he's got the right to be careless in the manner in which he speaks to the Father. On the contrary, there is an orderliness here. There is a due sense of dignity and propriety.

Though he was uniquely related to God the Father, related to him as the NIV translates it, and I do like it, God's one and only Son, his only begotten Son as King James puts it, Jesus never lost the sense of the majesty and the glory of God, so that his every move and his every word breathes a sense of respect and awe. I'm sure that is something to teach us all. As we come to consider the way in which our great High Priest carries his people thus into the presence of God in this act of intercession, we do well to bear in mind how completely he thus fulfills the Old Testament prefiguring of all this.

We have such a precious gift of God in the Old Testament, indicating beforehand in various ways what's going to happen, what's going to come to pass. And we're able to look back at some of those prefigurings or pre-intermissions of what was about to come, and then see how these things come to pass and are fulfilled in the New Testament. And we have it here.

In the Old Testament we have a High Priestly ministry. Jesus fulfills that. But now in order to indicate something of that, I can't go into it in detail.

In order to have some indication of that, let me just read to you a few words of directions that were given to Aaron, the first High Priest in the Old Testament. Listen to these words from Exodus 28. I'm quoting verses 12 and 29.

God is speaking. You shall set the two stones upon the shoulder pieces of the effort. You remember the effort was some contraption that the High Priest wore.

It came down to about here and went back. It came down his back. I don't know what you compare it with.

I better not venture into these technical terms or I'll make a mess of it. Anyway. You shall set two stones upon the shoulder pieces.

There were two pieces here right on his shoulders. As stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel. And Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his shoulders for remembrance.

The names of the twelve tribes of Israel were written on these bits, these pieces that were on his shoulders. So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel also on the breastplate in front of him. In the breastpiece of judgment upon his heart when he goes into the holy place to bring them to continual

remembrance before the Lord.

Now have you got the picture? Here is Aaron moving into the holy of holies. He goes in with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written here on his shoulders and written here across his heart. So that as High Priest he goes in as it were and he bears them in the strength of his shoulders and with a compassion of his heart.

Here in John 17 our Lord is fulfilling that typical and symbolic representation. And with all his might and with all his capacity with all the generosity and compassion of his heart he bears the twelve into the presence of God and pleads for them as they're going to face the kind of circumstances they've never faced before. It is as if the Lord Jesus said to quote from Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 13, here am I and the children which the Father has given me.

I'm coming in not just simply in my own capacity but I'm coming as High Priest and I'm bearing my children with me. Father here they are in my arms. Their names are graven on my heart and I bear them on my shoulders.

The picture is very graphic and very comforting to the disciples of our Lord in every age. Some of the older expositors, some of the older saints, the Puritans and their children and stepchildren were very fond of this part of scripture, this section of scripture. And I a Puritan would have eyes to see things like this.

Listen to this. In the thirteenth chapter our blessed Lord had as it were laid his hands on the defiled feet of his saints, washing the disciples' feet. Here in John 17 he lays the other hand on the throne of his Heavenly Father.

Forming a chain of marvelous workmanship. Reaching from God in glory to sinners in miry clay. In the thirteenth chapter his body is girt and he was stooping down towards their feet, our feet.

Here in John 17 his eyes are lifted upwards. Look at 17.1. And he is looking not at our feet but into the very face of his Father. What, asks this dear man, what that is asked for by one who fills up the whole distance between the bright throne of God and our defiled feet can be denied? And the answer is nothing.

His intercessions are infallible. If he is praying for you, you need never fear. Now, thus representing the objects of his concern before God, Jesus has something to say concerning his ministry to them, his responsibility for them, and concerning their response to him.

Just a word or two about these matters. He is introducing them to the Father and he says something, first of all, about what he has done for them, his ministry to them. This is what he says, the beginning of verse 6. I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world.

I've manifested your name to them. Who is Jesus praying for? Men and women, men in this case, to whom he has manifested the Father's name, he's praying for them. Now a moment's reflection will suffice to show that the Father's name was central to our Lord's entire teaching.

When, for example, he taught his disciples to pray, you remember how he impressed upon them that they should begin with a wholehearted desire for the hallowing of the Father's name. That required priority over everything else, and it was reflected in our brother's prayer tonight so beautifully. The name in biblical usage is, of course, synonymous with a person to whom it belongs.

You know, with us, a name is sometimes nothing much more than a number or a tag. Jim is just Jim, and Jane is just Jane, and we don't attach much significance to the name. We don't dream, we don't think, we don't imagine that there could be any connection between the name and the person.

But not so in biblical times. The name stood for the person in the totality of his or her being. Thus, in the Old Testament, when you cut off a name, you exterminate a person.

Now, I have no time to go into that, but I could illustrate it to you from at least a dozen places in the Old Testament. Then the name is not only the person, standing for the person, but the name is the person as revealed. When the name, when we use this term, the name of God.

It is always God as revealed. Let me give you one illustration. When the writer of Proverbs says, the name of the Lord is a strong tower, Proverbs 18.10, the name of the Lord means God as revealed.

God is here revealed as a hiding place. The name of the Lord is a strong tower. It's got nothing to do merely with a tag, the name, as we think of it, but it says that the name is a revelation.

To say that God is a strong tower means God is here being revealed as a place of safety. You're safe if you're hiding in God. Some of you are a little bit afraid of something tonight, afraid of circumstances, afraid of this, afraid of that.

My friend, hide in God. That's the only place to hide. The name again is the person actively present as far as God is concerned.

I'll give you one illustration of that. When the Old Testament spoke of the name of God, it meant not just the name of somebody who lives above the bright blue sky or the cloudy sky, as the case may be, but, but, but the name of God means God is present and active. A beautiful illustration of this is found in the incident on Mount Carmel.

You remember Elijah challenging the prophets of Baal and we read, we read this. You call on the name of your God and I will call upon the name of the Lord and the God who answers by fire. He is God.

You see what he's proposing is a, is a contest between names, but the point is that God is active. In referring to the name of God, he was speaking of a God who was, who, who was a person who had revealed himself, but who was there active coming down to do something. And our God is the living God.

Now, listen to what Jesus says. No one knew his Old Testament as Jesus did. Jesus tells the father that he has manifested his name to the men whom the father had given him out of the world.

I've manifested your name to them. What does that mean? Well, he's revealed the father, the person of God to them. He's revealed him truly close up.

They that have seen me have seen the father. They that have touched me have in a sense touched the father. And not only that he's revealed the father as active.

God was in Christ speaking. God was in Christ living. God was in Christ acting.

God was in Christ dying. As yet, of course, he has not laid down his life. This is the eve of the day on which he was to be crucified.

But the whole point is this thus far in the process of revelation, I've revealed the name, I've revealed the person. And not only that, they've believed, they've believed what I have disclosed to them. All this implied, of course, the claim that in the name or in the same way he had manifested the father's nature to them.

However, slow men were to comprehend it. The nature of the unseen God was actually revealed in the son's holiness and grace and justice and goodness. In one way or another, the transcendence and the imminence of God were alike revealed in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God was there on view. In the person of his co-equal son incarnate in flesh like ours. Now, in bearing his disciples in his arms and lifting them up before the father's throne now in prayer, the church is great.

High priest assures the father in the first place he has legitimate rights to pray for them because he's revealed the father's name to them and they don't believe the father. And so they have eternal life. They have received the messenger and they've received the message and they've received the one who sent the message on the messenger, the father in heaven.

And as such, they have eternal life. And Jesus is representing them before the father. These are the ones I'm representing.

His ministry to them. His responsibility for them. Look at verses 6 and 9. He refers to them as the men whom thou gavest me out of the world, thine they were, and thou gavest them to me.

And then in verse 9, I am praying notice for them. We'll take the other half of verse 9 later on, thine they were, whispers the divine petitioner into the years of his father, acknowledging the father's creation of them. And the father's choice of each one of them to give to the son.

Thine they were. Those who thus belong to God the father were then given by the father to the son, says he, the men whom thou gavest me out of the world. Who is he praying for? Those who belong to the father and then the father chose out of the whole totality of mankind and gave to the son.

From amongst the totality of his creatures, the father had given this little group to his son as vessels unto honor. They were given him to be his servants. They were given him in cover out of covenant obligation.

As the son had fulfilled what he had promised the father to do and covenanted to do, the father in turn had covenanted to give him of the fruit of his toil. And these men were given him out of the world. Jesus would thus assure the father that in presenting their needs before the throne, he's not pleading improperly.

Or for men who have no right to be thus represented. It was the father who thus placed them in the son's charge so that in now pleading for them, he, the son, is simply exercising such responsibility as the father had entrusted to him. The fact that they were given to the son, to the high priest to care for, means that at this point, he is simply accepting his responsibility for them and praying for their needs whom the father had put into his hands.

Thus would the ardent intercessor introduce those in his care to the father whose throne he approaches. It's just as if we see here our Lord saying this, just as a parent would say, these are my children whom God gave me to care for. And then goes on to make a petition for the family, for the children.

Jesus says, these are my children, father, you gave them to me and it's for them I'm praying. Or if you like, it's just like a shepherd standing with his sheep and saying, now these are the sheep that have been put in my care and I'm taking charge of these. Jesus acknowledges each one of the eleven of us, children that the father had given him.

And then he says to the father, now it's for these I'm praying. You put them in my care, you gave me them, now for them I'm praying. I have a right to pray for them.

This is my responsibility that you gave me, that's why I'm praying. Or one reason why I'm praying. At this point we do well to ask ourselves whether our Lord can legitimately plead for us on the same score.

Has he revealed the father to us? And have you received his revelation of the father? And have you believed what he said? Then if you have believed and have received and you have eternal life, Jesus says I'm concerned for you and I'll bear you on my shoulders, on my heart. I'll be your high priest. And the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews comes to us and says, he ever liveth to make intercession for us.

Oh precious promises of God. Not only that he's risen from the dead, not only that he's living with the father at his right hand, these are precious truths indeed. But my friend there's something more here.

What's he doing there? He ever liveth to make intercession for us. When Jesus reveals the father to you, that's not the end of his interest in you, it's but the beginning. Having revealed the father to you and given grace to you, that's just the beginning of his interest in you.

He will intercede for you and for me at the father's right hand. His responsibility for them and then his testimony concerning them. This is an interesting point.

What can the Savior say by way of testimonial to these disciples? You see they were not the finished products were they? Any more than you or I are. They had a long way to go. Some of these are going to play true and very soon and all of them are going to run away from him.

And Simon Peter is going to deny him. He knew exactly what was ahead. What then will he have to say about them if he's going to bear some sort of testimonial and give them a reference before the father? How is he going to refer to them? Listen to verses 6 and 8. They have kept thy word.

Now they know that everything that thou hast given me is from thee. For I have given them the words, notice in the plural. I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and know the truth that I came from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

Can I try to sum that up? In his testimonial to the father on their behalf, the following points need to be noted. One, they have received Christ's words and kept them as the word of God. They have received Christ's words and they have kept Christ's words as the one word or the one message of God.

Jesus tells the father, they have kept thy word. Later in the passage he adds, I have given them the words which thou gavest me and they have received them. And then they have kept my word.

These are basic requirements in all those who would share in the privilege of having Jesus as their high priest. They must receive every word that Jesus gives. And they must receive the words of Jesus as the word of the father.

And they must receive the words of Jesus as the word of the father that makes up one word, one indivisible message, one whole entity. O blessed are the sons and daughters of men who by the Holy Spirit have been convinced of the fact that the words of Jesus are the word of God. And have received those words as the word of God and believe them.

Secondly, this receiving and keeping of Christ's teaching implies believing that God sent him. Verse 8, they have believed that thou didst send me. He was no mere messenger who was given a message, given a word and said you declare these words or this word down there on earth.

No, no. The father sent him, the person, to declare the word but the word of which also he was the embodiment and the incarnation. One of the most precious things about the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, he is at one time the incarnation of it as well as the subject of it.

They have believed that thou didst send me. Thirdly, thus believing the words he taught and acknowledging him to be as divine as his message, these disciples have come to know certain things. Look at verse 7, the New English Bible translates it like this, they know that all thy gifts have come to me from thee.

And then verse 8, they believe and they know that I came forth from thee. But now let me hasten to add something here which needs to be added. The gift especially in mind in both the preceding and succeeding verses here is the message which Jesus received of the Father in order to give to man.

The message that Jesus received and then imparted is really God's message. The gospel is the gospel of God before it is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. You notice how Paul quite often traces the gospel back to God.

It is the word of God, it didn't originate in the incarnate Lord Jesus Christ. We are not meaning to demean or to detract from the glory of the Saviour, not at all. But the gospel is the gospel of God.

God's word was given to His Son and His Son declared those words and His people received the word. In receiving the word they received the Son and in receiving the Son and His word they received the Father who sent Him. Now says Jesus these are the ones I am praying for.

They have received the word of God, they have received the one whom the Father sent and in receiving the one sent and the message sent they received the Father who sent the Son with the message. I have a right to pray for them. I trust that all this applies to you and to me tonight that we have received the words of the Father given to the Son to bring to us.

And in receiving the words that we have received both the divine messenger the anointed one the Christ and in receiving the Christ have received the Father likewise. If that is the case then we too may say with C.L. Bancroft before the throne of God above I have a strong a perfect plea. A great high priest whose name is love whoever lives and pleads for me.

My name is graven on his hands, my name is written on his heart. I know that while in heaven he stands no tongue can bid me thence depart. Behold him there the risen lamb the perfect spot my perfect spotless righteousness.

The great unchangeable I am the king of glory and of grace. One with himself I cannot die. My soul is purchased by his blood.

My life is hid with Christ on high. With Christ my Savior and my God. He presents their credentials before the Father doing everything orderly assuring the Father I have a right to pray for them.

They have a right to my prayers. It's not only because they need he will refer to their needs. They will need me but irrespective of the pressures of the hour I've a right to pray for them.

They've a right to expect me to pray for them. They belong to me and you Father put them there and I'm exercising my responsibility as the one into whose care you put them. Isn't it wonderful to see Jesus like that? Is Jesus Christ your Savior? Oh I want you to see yourself tonight as in his arms as the great high priest.

And there at the right hand of the majesty upon high he holds you and he has every right to plead for you. And to represent you because he bought you with his blood and the Father put you in his care. And because of that he has every right to pray for you and for me.

Now the other thing I want us to look at tonight. The high priest pleads his peculiar interest in them for whom he prays. Verses 9 and 10.

I am praying for them. Now there's an emphasis in those words that I really can't represent by tone of voice or in any other way. And I'm not sure how to get it across.

But I am praying for them. I'm not praying for the world. But for those whom thou hast given me.

For they are thine. All mine are thine and thine are mine and I am glorified in them. Now there's no tautology here.

There's nothing repeated here that doesn't need to be repeated. Everything is precious. My dear people let's just try and get a hold of one or two of these things.

Having considered the manner in which our Lord presented the credentials of his people. Ere he began to intercede on their behalf. We now note the terms in which he pleads his peculiar interest in them as a group.

The high priestly function as foreshadowed in scripture was twofold. It involved first of all the offering up to God of such sacrifices as their sins required. That's what the high priest did in the Old Testament.

The priestly function had always this in mind. Whatever the need of the hour. The priest and the high priest would be involved in the offering up of the requisite sacrifices.

Then on the basis of the sacrifices duly made they would pray, they would intercede. Strictly speaking that prophetic and symbolic ministry could only be fulfilled. After our Lord Jesus Christ had laid down his life as the Lamb slain before the foundations of the world.

What we have here in John 17 therefore is but a pre-intimation of what is yet to come. Following Calvary, following what was going to happen the next day. It's all the more wonderful and meaningful that our blessed Lord should here take such pains to present the credentials of his people.

And profess his interest in them. It is as if he would assure them and us that his heavenly ministrations on our behalf will never be slip-shot. Never be half-hearted.

Never be mechanically performed. You see, he's praying this prayer in the hearing of his disciples. And it must have had a tremendous impact upon them to hear him being so concerned to tell the Father this and to remind the Father of that.

That everything is reasonable. Everything has a rational and a moral basis. He's not acting out of order.

He's not pleading for a special favor for which he has no right. He's the high priest. Tomorrow he's going to lay down his life and offer the one sacrifice for sin forever that will atone for all their sins and put every wrong right.

And on the basis of that he can ask for anything that is necessary for the well-being of those whom he represents. Now look for a moment at the scope of his intercession. I am praying for them.

I'm not praying for the world, but for those whom thou hast given me. Now you can hardly miss the calculated and the careful manner in which the intercessor begins his important task. With a very solemn sense of the majesty of God, of the need of his people and the immense issues that depend upon his mediatorial work.

Jesus attends to this task with the utmost care, the most scrupulous care. It is as delicate as it is strategic. So that his every notion and every motion at every point is full of significance.

I am praying for them. Thus does he stand or kneel, whichever the case may have been, before the heavenly throne and profess his advocacy of his people. His appearance at the throne is on their behalf.

Namely, on behalf of those whose credentials he has given. He's praying for them. He's not praying for everybody.

And let me remind you, he's praying for those who have kept his word. Who know that everything he has given, that everything that Jesus had was given him by the Father. Every word that Jesus spoke was given him by the Father.

Every power that Jesus expressed was given him by the Father. Every mission that Jesus had been given, every task to perform, it was all from the Father. He had come as the incarnate Lord to do what had been given him to do by the Father.

They believe that. Now, though that designation of his precise charge is carefully and deliberately made. Along with the following words which qualify and confirm the same truth.

Now, the primary emphasis in these words, I am praying for them. Actually falls upon the fact that it is he who is praying. Now, we take it, I am praying for them.

And we tend to put the emphasis upon the words, for them. Because Jesus goes on to say, quite naturally, I am not praying for the world. But really, the way the sentence is couched requires the emphasis, first of all, to be put upon this.

I am the one who is praying for them. Literally, Jesus put it like this. I, personal pronoun, for them, I am praying, a verb.

And what he wants to stress is his own person as the one who is pleading, as the one who is petitioning. Now, this is very important. Of all the translations, I suppose the Syriac version has captured the point

most beautifully in a translation.

I was going to ask one of the Aramaic speaking people how their Bibles gave it. But the Aramaic puts it like this. I, even I, am praying for them.

You say, why make a fuss about that? Oh, my dear brother or sister, take a good look at it. I tell you there's something in that for you, you mustn't miss it. The emphasis upon the petitioner, upon the divine intercessor, is all important for your comfort and mine.

Precious as the terms and content of the prayer may be, and comforting as it is to know that we are being represented before the Father with such scrupulous care, feeling, and intensity, the supremely important factor is that the petitioner is the Son of God. That's the most important thing about this prayer, the one who's praying it. Others of us can use these petitions, but the significance of it is this, that the one who's praying this prayer in the first place is the mediator of the new covenant, is the one mediator between God and men.

It's the anointed Messiah, it's the Son of God become flesh, it's the one who died for us, it's our great high priest. I, for them, I'm praying. The divinely appointed Savior of men, no mere human being utters these words.

The intercessor has every right thus to plead, as I've been stressing, and every qualification to do so effectively. Let us therefore not miss the point that the petitioner here pleading the cause of his people then present, and yet to come by the way, gives the prayer its essential value and its rich significance. It is his prayer for his people, prayed with his soul and with his authority.

That's what gives it its significance. His sacrifice for his people has established his blood-bought right for everything that he asks. I wonder, my friend, how many of our burdens we could shed tonight if only we recognized that and lived with it.

Anything that Jesus Christ asks for on your behalf, on my behalf, he has a right to it. And there are no ifs about it. He knows the Father's will, and he knows what's best for you.

And if he asks, there is no power on earth nor in hell that can intervene and intrude. What he asks for on the basis of his sacrifice, he has a right to receive. You and I can't talk about our rights in the presence of God.

We go there by grace, and we are accepted by the mercy of God. We have no intrinsic personal rights before God. Jesus does.

Nothing needful for his people is outside his authority to plead and to procure. His high priestly prayers are all offered under the canopy of his atoning sacrifice. Now, when rightly understood, this fact which we have been trying to expound yields tremendous comfort to the Lord's people.

When once we grasp the fact that Jesus Christ has authority to pray for all the needs of his people, that his prayers are therefore infallible and that he actually does pray for us and for our needs, life assumes an altogether new perspective. Now, it is good, it is good to have other people to pray for us. And I think I've tried to say this sometime before.

I'm sure I have, but let me say it again anyway. You know, in the last analysis, you and I can do without the prayers of any man, any woman. In the last analysis, you don't need them.

Neither do I. Now, please don't misunderstand me. It's the most precious thing to have people to pray for you. Irene Quick, you're going back to South Africa.

You want people to pray for you. Rightly so. And all of you who serve the Lord, let's pray for one another.

We're told to do it. I'm not forgetting that, dear people. And I don't mean to negate that or to be cloud that precious aspect of our privilege and responsibility for one another, of bearing one another's burdens before the throne as in other respects.

But finally, ultimately, we don't need the prayers of anybody, save one, save one. His intercessions are infallible. And without them, all the prayers of all the people of all the world are invalid.

Unless He prays for me before the Father, you pray in vain. But if He prays, then let the petitions of the people come to the Father in His name, and they mean something. I am praying for them.

Yes, I am praying for them. But it is I who am praying for them. The mediator, the high priest, the one you chose to be their savior and to bring them home to glory.

It is I who am praying for them. The one who died for them and who will rise again from the dead and ascend and who rules at your right hand. I am praying for them.

Oh, may the blessedness of it capture some of us tonight that this next week can be different for us. Then He goes on to say, and I must draw to a close now, but I must say a word about this, I suppose. I am not praying for the world, but the comforting positive that we have just been considering is now followed by a challenging and confirmatory negative.

Jesus disclaims any present representation on behalf of the world. I am not praying for the world. Now the world represents the unheeding, unbelieving mass of mankind.

The world is walking in its own way. The world is under the power of the prince of the darkness. The world is dead in trespasses and sins.

The world is life organized without reference to God and apart from any desire to please God or to do His will. That is the world. Jesus says, I am not praying for the world.

I am praying for them. Now you scratch your heads. What does that mean? Do we conclude that Jesus has no interest in the world? Well now don't conclude too quickly.

We must not conclude from this limiting negative that Jesus Christ has no interest in the world at large or that He does not pray for the world at any time. As a matter of fact, Jesus very definitely has the world in mind towards the end of this very prayer when He pleads for certain things and explains His reason for praying in these words, so that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me. So He is not forgetting the world.

This kind of concern for the world at large is revealed in many of our Lord's words and actions. He bade His disciples pray for the unbelieving, persecuting world when He said, Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you.

That's the world all right. So that you may be the sons of your Father who is in heaven. That's the world all right.

Moreover, He Himself did precisely that when He cried upon the cross, For men of the world, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. That's the world all right. This is likewise consistent with other parts of biblical preaching or teaching on the same subject.

Paul, for example, taught Christians to pray that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgiving be made for all men. What then is this? Well, now, without my taking up time, what we have here, of course, is our Lord saying this, saying something like this, I am here acting as the High Priest. And as the High Priest, I only represent my people.

I only represent those who have received the word that the Father gave me. And all the words that I have given them representing the message of the Father. Those that have received the message and the messenger and the one who sent both messenger and message.

I'm representing them. And here in my high priestly ministry, I am only praying for my people. There is an exclusiveness about our Lord's interest in His own people.

Jesus is here placing His arms deliberately, I should say metaphorically, around the exclusive company of those for whom He lives in the heavenlies. His own people. Then I conclude with this.

He gives us some reasons why this limiting interest. And I guess we just ought to have them in mind as we come to a conclusion tonight. Every reason is here very beautifully meaningful.

Look at the last part of verse 9. Specific reasons for His limited interests. For His interest only in His own. Well, He says, because they are Thine.

Because they are Thine. Jesus, why are you praying for the eleven? Because they belong to the Father. The first reason for praying for those whom He is now bearing in His arms before God is that they are God's property.

Mark well what the Saviour said. He's not praying for these people primarily because of His love for them, much less because of their love for Him. Oh, He did love them unto death.

Tomorrow He's going to die for them. I'm not trying to forget that or minimize that. But the basic reason is this.

They belong to the Father. And because they belong to the Father, they are my responsibility. I'm here to look after my Father's property.

You know that's wonderful. Why should Jesus pray for you believer? Because you're good. Because you're in church on a Sunday night when not many people believe in the Lord's day anymore.

Only a half day or a quarter in some cases. Why should He pray for you? Why should He pray for me? I'll tell you. If there were no other reason in the whole wide world, He'd pray for you because you belong to the Father.

And He's concerned about the Father's property. And if you had no imminent pressing need that caused you to pray with tears tonight, Jesus would still pray for you because of His respect for the Father's

property. Isn't it wonderful? He goes around these pews in Knox tonight and He sees a man and a woman here, one after another, and He says, that's the Father's property.

And because He, because she's the Father's property, I pray for Him. I pray for her. They are Thine, He says.

I must pray for them. And then He goes on. It sounds strange that He should say this to some of us.

All mine are Thine. And then in a moment, the next breath, He will say, Thine are mine, but let's take the first. All mine are Thine.

You notice there are no exceptions to the rule here laid down. Every believer placed in the Savior's arms to be saved from a dying, perishing world is the Father's property. Now, I don't know how I'm going to say why I should be saying this twice on the same day, but it comes in here again.

I said it this morning. I hadn't meant to. Jesus Christ disclaims any exclusive property to His own, so that there are no Jesus people in the last analysis, because Jesus says to the Father, All mine are Thine.

So don't speak of yourself as Jesus people, period, exclusively. Jesus doesn't accept that. He contradicts you.

And He tells you, put things right. If you belong to Me, you belong to the Father. All mine are Thine, He says to the Father.

There's no exclusivism within the Trinity. It says, Jesus, everyone who belongs to Me belongs to you. This is very important, really.

Far more important than I have time to elucidate now. The entire kingdom which Jesus Christ inaugurates, and will at last consummate in its perfection, is to be delivered up to the Father, so that God may be all in all. There's no division between the Father and the Son, and the Son delights to acknowledge that the Father, the Father is the one to whom everything belongs.

And you know, that'll be the great song in the glory, won't it? Worthy art Thou to take the scrolls, and to open the seals. For Thou wast slain, and by Thy blood didst ransom men. For who? For God.

From every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, Thou wast made them a kingdom of priests to our God. Jesus Christ claims no exclusive property, therefore but gladly acknowledges the Father's continuing right to all that has been given to the Son, and prays for all because of His respect for the Father's property. But now listen.

And Thine are Mine. This is a beautiful relationship between the Father and the Son, you see. There's no arguing here, no cross-currents here.

No, you have you as an eye of Mine, and keep your hands off My property. None of that. Isn't it beautiful? Here is a third reason why Jesus prays for those who believe in Him.

They belong to the Father, and because He respects the Father, He will pray for the Father's people. But so also are they His own. They are His as chosen, and given to Him by the Father.

They are His by the regenerating ministry of the Holy Spirit. They are His as the One who died and would shed His blood on the morrow for them. And then He adds this, And I am glorified in them.

Now this on the one hand humbles Me, and yet it encourages Me. Jesus says concerning all those for whom He prays, I am glorified in them. These are the people in His high priestly arm.

He is glorified in them. Is He glorified in you? Is He glorified in Me? That's very challenging. Was He glorified in these eleven? What does the text say? How could He have been glorified? Well, He was glorified in their acceptance of Him as Revealer of the Father.

He was glorified in their acceptance of Him as the Redeemer of sinners. He was glorified in their acceptance of Him as the Messiah, the Son of the Living God, as they confessed Him in Caesarea Philippi. He was glorified in what they believed, and in how the way they honored Him they failed a thousand times.

But just think of Simon Peter, for example, in John 6. I have no time to go into it in detail. Just take this as an illustration. And they were very imperfect and immature at that stage.

And the crowds are going, and Jesus turns to them and says, Will you also go away? And blessed, blessed be Simon. Lord, He says, to whom else can we go? You alone have the words of eternal life. He's glorified in them, you see.

And Jesus says, It is true of all My people, in some way or other I am having glory in them. Therefore I must pray for them. They may fail a thousand times, but their heart in some measure is set on bringing glory to Me, and their lives must be bringing glory to Me.

And lastly, now we come down right to the very real, pressing, urgent need as the disciples would see it. If they had composed this prayer, if we dare thus speak, they would have put this evidently at the top of the list. Now, says Jesus, I am no more in the world.

But they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Jesus puts this last on the list not because it's unimportant, but because everything else that preceded it was of more importance and greater importance. It was important that He present their credentials.

It was important that He tell the Father the kind of people that He's pledged to pray for. And it was important that He remind the Father that it was He who was praying as the great High Priest. But now He comes down, and we can say nothing about that tonight.

He hasn't forgotten what's going to happen before that day is over, Gethsemane. And all through the night, and into the next day, and then the crowd of sheep scattered, knowing not where to go. He's praying for them.

And as sure as for Peter, though Satan was allowed to put him into his sieve and sift him, Jesus said, I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail. And when you are turned around again, strengthen your brethren, so, too, concerning the other, the ten of them. They, too, will be scattered, and they, too, will be shaken by Satan.

But much of the chaff will be lost by the time they gather together again, and in due course, they, too, like Simon, will be able to strengthen their brethren. And once again, we see this frightened group of Good

Friday and the day following. We see them gather together again because Jesus prayed for them.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, I really don't know of any more significant and relevant truth of Scripture for you and for me than this. And if I were you, for the sake of your own soul and your own peace and poise in a world of sin and temptation and trial, come to terms with this John 17, and read it in the light of the epistle to the Hebrews, and you will find that there is something here that can be like ointment upon the troubled wounds of your spirit and of your heart from day to day, just to know that your great high priest is so concerned for you that he prays for you, and he has a right to pray, and his prayers can never fail. Hallelujah.

Isn't it wonderful? I don't know everybody in this congregation, but I look around upon you from this pulpit, and I know some of your circumstances. Now, I'm not going to say what I know. Don't get excited.

But I know that some of you are going into this kind of circumstance tomorrow, all being well. And I know that others of you have got other kinds of circumstances quite different waiting for you. And yet here is one who intercedes for all of us, who knows us through and through, and every detail of our lives, and if there were no other valid reason why he should pray for us, here is the basic one.

He respects God's property, and he will therefore surely pray for God's every child. Start a new week with that. Go back to the office with that.

Go back to the university with that. Go back to your office with that. Go back to your school with that.

Take it with you. Like the bee, get the honey out of it and live on the sweetness of it. And when you come back here next Lord's Day in the will of God, you'll have something to bless and praise him for, for he never fails.

Let us pray. O Lord God, Father in Heaven, blessed Son of the Father, our great High Priest and Mediator with the Holy Spirit, Father, Son and Spirit, we worship you. It is imponderably great that we should have a passage like this to meditate upon, that we should have such a cluster of truths to assure us of the care of our Lord Jesus Christ, to present our needs worthily, justly, acceptably before the Holy Father in the heavenly places.

Father, encourage those of us who need encouragement. Assure those of us who have doubts. And gather us all into a new, deeper fellowship than ever before of men and women who believe and who trust and who, out of a situation of trust and faith, really hope, knowing that you cannot let us down.

These things we ask too, our Father, in the name of your Son, our Savior. Amen.

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