

# Jesus' Heart Revealed in Prayer

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 17:6-19

**Preached on:** Sunday, June 28, 2015

We come this morning once again to the word of God and John's Gospel, chapter 17, as we continue to go through very carefully our Lord Jesus' high priestly prayer. This morning, I have entitled my discourse to you "Christ's Heart Revealed in Prayer." In a few minutes, we will be looking at verses 6 through verse 19. As we prepare our hearts to receive his word this morning, I would like to say that I find it interesting that we live in a Christian culture that is saturated with Bible teaching: we can hear the Bible taught on the radio; on television; you can go to Christian bookstores; it's all over the internet. And yet I find it interesting that most believers tend to have a very superficial knowledge of God and they enjoy very little of his soul-satisfying presence deep within their soul. D. A. Carson has summarized this well and I've included this in the quote that I gave you this morning in your bulletin. He says, "The one thing we most urgently need in Western Christendom is a deeper knowledge of God. We need to know God better. When it comes to knowing God, we are a culture of the spiritual stunted. So much of our religion is packaged to address our felt needs and these are almost uniformly anchored in our pursuit of our own happiness and fulfillment. God simply becomes the great being who potentially, at least, meets our needs and fulfills our aspirations. We think rather little of what he is like, what he expects of us, what he seeks in us. We are not captured by his holiness and his love. His thoughts and words capture too little of our imagination, too little of our discourse, too few of our priorities. We are selfishly running after God's blessings without running after him."

My friends, this morning as we look at the text before us, we have a wonderful opportunity to get to know God better and to run after him that we might obey him more, that we might worship him well. In fact, Jesus has said in verse 3 of chapter 17, "This is eternal life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." May I remind you that the supreme blessing of heaven is going to be able for us to have an intimate knowledge of our God in all of his glory and be able to enjoy him and worship him forever and if this is truly your desire as I hope it is, then we can enjoy a sample of this today as we behold the glory of God in the face of Christ. This is certainly my responsibility, my calling, and therefore the divine mandate and passion of my heart that you may know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

Now, as we come to the text this morning, may I remind you of what is happening: it's the night of Jesus' betrayal. He is with his 11 disciples. They don't understand fully what is going on. In just a few hours, their Lord is going to be crucified and so he prays audibly with them around him so that they can be comforted and even taught by his words and that's what's happening even today with us, his disciples, some 2,000 years later. You will recall that in the first five verses, the Lord Jesus reveals to us his passion to be restored to his former glory. He reveals to us his passion for his Father's glory. He says in verse 1, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You." And in verse

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5, "Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." And he also has a passion to be able to give eternal life to all those whom the Father had given him. Verse 2, he says, "You gave Me authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Me, I may give eternal life."

But now in verses 6 through 19, he shifts his attention to his disciples and here he intercedes on their behalf and by extension, on our behalf. I want you to notice what he says beginning in verse 6,

6 I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. 7 Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; 8 for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. 9 I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; 10 and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. 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. 13 But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. 14 I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. 18 As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. 19 For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

There is so much to be gleaned from this passage but I would invite you to join me by focusing on two categories that I believe will be edifying and encouraging to you and most importantly, exalt the majesty and the excellency of Christ. We are going to look, first of all, at how Christ views his disciples, how he sees them in his heart and, again, because they represent us, how he sees all of us as true disciples. But secondly, we are going to see how Christ prays for his disciples.

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So here he intercedes for his 11 apostles and all living disciples at that time, however, may I remind you that the essence of his prayer is common to all true disciples and so the apostles here are therefore representative of all believers and as we look at his prayer, we can here see a pattern of how our ascended high priest cares for us; how he prays for us. And here we see that a true disciple is one who was given to Christ by the Father. They belonged to him and were taken out of the world, the world referring to God's created order, his created moral order that is now in vigorous rebellion against God and in full submission to Satan. It's staggering to know that God knew me and loved me before he ever created me. Do you ever think about that with yourself? It's just an amazing thought. Then he gave me physical life to live in this fallen world which appeals to my fallen flesh but then he rescued me, as Paul says, from the domain of darkness and transferred me to the kingdom of his beloved Son.

Well, likewise, the disciples for whom Jesus prayed on that solemn night were "men whom You gave Me out of the world," he says. "They were Yours and You gave them to Me." Here is yet another example of the doctrine of sovereign election. And he says, "I have manifested Your name." You will remember that encompassed within the name of God are all of his attributes, all that pertains to him and so he is saying that, "I have manifested, I have revealed the fullness of your character. The fullness of your nature and attributes embodied in your very name." Bear in mind that the Lord Jesus Christ was God Incarnate, God in human flesh. He was the supreme revelation and manifestation of God, the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, Paul tells us, in whom all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form. It's for this reason that Jesus says in John 12:45, "He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me." So Jesus was the Incarnate God, the Incarnate Word of God, the self-revelation, if you will, the self-expression of God and, frankly, if a man does not know Jesus, he does not know God and God does not know him in a saving way.

In Psalm 9:10, we read, "And those who know Your name will put their trust in You, For You, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek You." And we know according to Scripture that all who will seek after God are those whom the Father has given the Son, the elect of his grace. I hope you realize how incredible it is that Jesus has manifested to us the name of God, the Father's name, and what confidence we have in his name because, again, within his name we find all of his attributes. Think of the nature of his holy character, the mercy and power of his saving grace. It's for this reason that Solomon tells us in Proverbs 18:10, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower; The righteous runs into it and is safe." What an amazing text.

So Jesus manifested the name of the Father to the men that the Father gave him out of the world and how can we recognize those whom the Father has given the Son? He says,

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"they have kept Your word." You see, to know God is to love God and to love God is to love his commandments and to obey them. Genuine saving faith and obedience to the word of God are inseparable in Scripture. He goes on in verse 7 and says, "Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me." Contrast this with the Jewish leaders who insisted that Jesus was a fraud, that the miracles that he performed he did by the power of Satan. And yet the 11 and his other living disciples believed that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah of Israel, the Son of God that the Father had sent and they believed his very words were those of the Father. This is what Jesus celebrates. You will remember what Peter said in John 6, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life and we have believed and have come to know that You are the holy one of God."

There is a blessed truth to be learned here. Think about it: Jesus knew how pitifully weak and immature their faith really was. He knew their shallow and even distorted theology, their understanding of divine truth. I mean, after all, they still didn't understand and didn't want to even understand why he was leaving, why he was talking about his death. In their hearts, they're still battling with who is going to be first in the kingdom. The Holy Spirit had not come upon them yet to illumine their hearts and minds to understand all of these things and to eventually inspire them to write the rest of God's revelation to us in the New Testament. Yet despite their immaturity, despite their ignorance and, frankly, their stubbornness, Jesus celebrates the most basic fundamental important reality that was true of them and what is it? They received his words and truly understood that he came forth from the Father and they believed that the Father had sent him. In other words, they believed that he was the Son of God, their Savior and their Lord.

One of my grandsons told me that this last week he gave his heart to Christ and that God saved him and I celebrated that and, of course, my attitude with those things with children and even with adults is one of guarded optimism. I say, "Praise God. Let's wait and see. Let's see if there grows fruits of repentance and let's talk about this," and he was thinking that maybe he could be baptized tonight and I said, "No, hold on here. Let's wait a while." But as I talked with him about what had happened and what he understood, I could tell that his theology was like my theology when I was nine years old, it was pretty weak but do you know what he knew? That he was a sinner and that God had saved him and that Jesus was the Son of God that died for him, that was buried and that rose again the third day and that's the essence of what's going on here and Jesus celebrates this.

Oh, how precious is even the tiniest seed of faith to our Savior. Don't you see that here? How precious to know that the Lord sees far more in us than we see in ourselves and how

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exciting to know that he intercedes on our behalf even when we have the faith of a child, even when our faith is no bigger than that miniscule mustard seed because he knows that like that little mustard seed our faith will grow into a massive plant and bear much fruit for the glory of God. Beloved, know this: your faith may be as weak as water, your understanding of Bible doctrine may be as shallow as water on a plate, nevertheless, the ascended Christ is interceding on your behalf at the right hand of the Father and as I think about this, our faithful high priest presents us before the Father not on the basis of our merits but according to the perfections of his righteousness, of his grace, of his love. You know, Satan is the accuser of the brethren we are told in Scripture but we are hidden in Christ. He is our advocate and because of his great love, he looks beyond our defects and speaks well of us because we have kept his word whatever understanding of his word that we may have and by his grace and power, we will grow unless we grieve and quench the Spirit with habitual rebellion against his will.

Well, with this in mind, Jesus goes on to pray in verse 9, "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them." Here we see, once again, that the Father and the Son have all things in common. As believers, we belong both to the Father and to the Son and even to the Holy Spirit who is the one who has convicted us; who has regenerated us; caused us to be born again; who seals us to the day of redemption. And by his indwelling power, he is the one that conforms us into the likeness of Christ and gives us both the desire as well as the power to live for his glory. But notice in verse 9, he says something curious. He says, "I ask on their behalf. I do not ask on behalf of the world." Well, what does this mean? Does God have no love and concern for the world? Well, of course he does. Of course he has concern and love for the world. We know from John 3:16 that God loves the world and for this reason he sent his only begotten Son into the world that whosoever believes in him might be saved. And we can see by what is called common grace that God causes his Son to rise on the evil and the good as Jesus said in Matthew 5 and he sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. But whatever the extent of God's love for the world that's in rebellion to him, this world into which he has sent his Son, we can see that he has a peculiar, a special love for those that he has chosen, those that he has promised to give to his Son.

It's my heart's desire to be obedient and to love my enemies and that's tough to do, isn't it? We all know that. To someone seek their greatest good. To let them see the love of Christ in me even for them. But my love for my own family exceeds all of that. You understand that. We love our family in a different way and that's what's happening here. As a perfect man, we know that Christ hung upon the cross and he prayed for the Father to forgive his enemies but here Jesus prays not as a sinless man praying for his enemies

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but rather as the one Mediator between God and man, praying for the objects of his sovereign grace and so here like the high priest in the Old Testament, the great high priest, the Lord Jesus, is bringing before the Father those ingrafted upon the breastplate of his heart, those whom the Father had given him, the elect of his grace for it is with them, unlike the people of the world, that he has a special saving love and an intimate relationship, "those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours."

I just find myself being staggered at the thought of all of this. The Lord Jesus who ever lives to make intercession for us saw them and sees us really in two ways: first of all, as the Father's possession. Think about that: he sees us as the Father's possession. You see, we belong to the Father by creation and by his uninfluenced sovereign choice. Just look at the verses. In verse 2, he says, "You gave Me authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Me, I may give eternal life." Look at verse 6, "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me." Verse 9, "I ask on their behalf; of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours." Look over at verse 24, "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am." Dear friends, what a magnificent truth this is and what incomprehensible comfort this would have been to those discouraged, those fearful disciples and what joy this should animate within the heart of every believer to think that we are the Father's possession by creation and by election. It's an amazing thought and this is how Jesus viewed his living disciples of that day, disciples that represent us, and this is why he is so concerned for them, why he's so passionate about their well-being. This is why he would give his very life for them.

Ah, but Jesus sees something more here. Not only does he see his disciples as the Father's possession but also he sees us as a love gift from the Father to him. He sees us as a select bride, chosen and betrothed to the Son. A love gift of a redeemed humanity. We see this in our wedding services, do we not, when a father gives his daughter away and presents her to the bridegroom? I will say, "Who gives this woman to be married to this man?" and the father will say, "I do." In other words, he approves of the bridegroom, believing that he will care for his beloved daughter. He believes that by their physical union they will bear the fruit of children that will bring glory to God and by their spiritual union, that they will give glory to God and bring honor to the family name. Like it was yesterday, I remember when my precious Nancy came down the aisle and was presented to me. There was nothing on earth that captured my attention more than her beauty and her grace. All of you men can understand that. She was and remains the supreme object of my earthly affection, the love of my life and my most precious possession in all of the world. Even before the moment she was presented to me, my heart's desire was to be one with her forever.

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Dear Christian, don't you see the parallel here with what is happening in Jesus' prayer? This is what captivates the heart of Jesus. His passionate plea to the Father is to protect and purify the bride that the Father has given to him. This glorious love gift from eternity past that the Father had given to him to redeem with his very blood. God instituted marriage between a man and a woman to picture this covenantal love and Paul captures this so perfectly under the inspiration of the Spirit as he writes about Christ's love for his bridal church in Ephesians 5. There in verse 25, he says, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless."

Dear Christian, this is the supreme preoccupation of the heart of Jesus in his prayer. The longing of his heart is for those who belong to his Father by creation and election and who were now given to him as a love gift to be his beautiful and his holy bride. We might be able to think of it this way: "Who gives these sinners to be married to this Savior?" and the Father says, "I do, the one who made them, the one who chose them by my uninfluenced grace." And I suppose we could even extend that and say, "And what dowry does the groom give to the bride?" Well, verse 2, he gives her eternal life that she might know God. Verse 6, he gives her a revelation of his Father. By his very life and words, he manifests to her the fullness of his character, the fullness of his Father's nature and attributes embodied in his very name, the very name that the groom shares as well.

Folks, as I think about it, can there be any greater marvel in all of the universe than this? That God the Father would give his Son a love gift of sinners that he must ransom by his own sacrificial death that they might become his purified and spotless bride for all of eternity? Beloved, if you've been given new birth, you must know this: that before time began the Father set his love upon you, that you were his possession then as you are now and before you were created, the heavenly Father knew your name. He had an intimate knowledge of who you were before he formed you in your mother's womb. He knew everything about your physical and spiritual and emotional features. Do you know what else? There was absolutely nothing about you that deserved his love. Nevertheless, in eternity past, he promised to give you as a love gift to his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to be his chosen bride. The supreme object of his love and affection. A love so strong that he would give his life as a ransom for you.

Folks, we have never been our own. We were bought with a price. We are God's by creation. We are God's by sovereign election. And we are God's by redemption. This is how Jesus sees his disciples. This is how he sees every man and woman, every boy and every girl who have embraced the Lord Jesus Christ in repentant faith. Oh, what comfort,

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what encouragement this must have been to those disciples who, frankly, didn't understand it as fully as we do now but eventually they would and what comfort this can bring to any of you that here today struggling with some great need in your life and need of some special measure of grace.

But I want you to notice how his prayer shifts in verses 11 through 19. We have seen how Christ views his disciples, now we see 2.: how Christ prays for his disciples. Notice in verse 11 he says, "I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to thee." You see, the Lord had been their ever-present guardian, their physical rock and fortress, their ever-present all-sufficient strength but now he's about to leave them in a world that hates them. These men of little weak faith, lacking in wisdom and discernment, men underestimating the power of their flesh and the power of Satan, overconfident and proud. I have just described myself and I've just described you. Although he promised not to leave them as orphans but that he would ask the Father to send the helper, the Holy Spirit, to assist them in the battle that lay ahead, nevertheless, he is deeply concerned for them and, folks, he continues to be deeply concerned for all of us. He continues to intercede on our behalf and so he prays for two things primarily that I want us to look at. He prays 1. For their spiritual preservation. 2. Their spiritual consecration. Again, might I add, this is really the pattern of his prayer for us today.

Think of their spiritual preservation for which he pleads. Notice Jesus goes on in verse 11 to address his Father as "Holy Father," and of course, this underscores the utter transcendence of God and the familial intimacy of his Father and of our Father. "Holy Father, keep them in thy name." In other words, "Preserve them in loyalty to your character, the name which thou hast given me that they may be one even as we are." Now please understand, Jesus is not praying for some kind of first century ecumenism here where we all get along or we just all come together in one great denomination. Certainly there were no denominations back then but Jesus is saying essentially this, "Father, by the power of your holy nature, do what only you can do. Keep them in your name. May they be one in their stand for the Gospel. May they be one in their love and their defense of the truth. Preserve their loyalty to your character. Help them to be unyielding in devotion to the revelation of yourself that I have mediated to them as they face the hostilities of the world, as they face Satan in all of his fury. That they may be one even as we are." In other words, "That they might be united in purpose for which they are being kept, namely to glorify God." You see, the Lord knew that they were all distinct individuals with all of their unique difficulties and sins and weaknesses so he is praying that they will be one in essence; they will be one in purpose; one in love; one in ministry with and to one another. Perfectly united in submission to the revelation that Jesus had given them.

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He says in verse 12, "While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me," and indeed Jesus was the Good Shepherd that cared for his sheep and protected them by his very presence, protected them from apostasy. He said, "I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled." Indeed, Jesus predicted that Judas would defect as did the prophet Zechariah in Zechariah 11.

"But now I come to You," he says in verse 13, "and these things I speak in the world," in other words, "while I'm still on earth, so that they may have My joy made full in themselves." What an amazing thought. Within a few minutes, Jesus is going into the garden of Gethsemane. He will sweat drops of blood because of the anguish of his soul. He knows the torture, the horror that he will face and yet what is the preoccupation of his heart? That somehow those that the Father had given him would experience the same joy in all of its fullness that he experiences.

Well, what is this joy that he has that he now seeks for his disciples? Oh, dear friends, it is the joy of fellowship with the Father in eternal glory and this comes from knowing God, from living in his presence. David understood this and experienced this so well. We read about it earlier this morning in Psalm 16:5. He says, "The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You support my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me. I will bless the LORD who has counseled me; Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night. I have set the LORD continually before me; Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore," here it is, "my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely."

Jesus wants them to experience the joy that he experienced that was ultimately rooted in the fellowship that he had with the Father, a fellowship that they would one day enjoy. He wants them to hear this because he knows how discouraged they are. He wants to comfort them, to encourage them, and so he speaks these truths audibly for them to hear. Audibly as well so that they can be recorded so that they can bless us as his disciples some 2,000 years later. To know that our ascended high priest ever lives to make intercession for us is something that should put a song in our heart and should put a smile on our face even when those tears come rolling down our cheeks.

Dear Christian, the secret of our perseverance is that the Lord Jesus is praying for us. Think about that. The Lord Jesus is praying for us. If that is such a priority of his heart, should it not be the priority of ours? Many fellow believers that we know are undergoing great turmoil in their lives right now. They are in great need and they need to experience our compassion and our care and so what do they do? Well, they come to the word for comfort, for strength. They go to the Lord for comfort and strength and what does the

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Lord teach us to do and how does he use us? He teaches us to pray for them and to come alongside them. Oh, what a special love our Savior has for his own to think that he prays for us.

He goes on in verse 14 and he says, "I have given them Your word." I have to pause here as I was thinking about this, there is much giving going on in this passage. He has given them eternal life that they might know God. He has given them a revelation of the Father's glory. Now he says, "I have given them Your word." He's about to give his life. "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." We all know, don't we, how the world hates us and the disciples are about to experience the full fury of that hatred. We know that the world doesn't share our values, our priorities, our love for Christ and his words. We are citizens of another kingdom, aren't we? We're aliens. We're pilgrims. We're strangers in this land. In fact, that way I see it is we're really homeless. We're homeless. This isn't our home.

But he says, "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one." Now, let's think about this. The world has Satan's orderly system and we know that his purpose is ultimately to thwart the purposes of God and he does this in many ways but you could summarize the ways that he does this by saying that he does it through deception, temptation and persecution. Deception, temptation and persecution and we can see this so vividly in our culture today, can't we, as Satan works in his world system to produce within people a rabid commitment to somehow redefine marriage, that which God has defined to happen between a man and a woman but now to include same sexes. A blasphemous attack on our holy God and on his moral order. Think of how Satan is doing this right now and, again, bear in mind, this is how Satan works and the Lord is praying that his disciples will be kept from the evil one.

God has given us two institutions: the church and marriage. Both were given to us to glorify God by worshiping the Lord Jesus Christ who is to be the head of both the church and marriage and when the Lord Jesus Christ is disregarded, when he is replaced, both will suffer and become a mockery of his intended purpose. Knowing this, Satan deceives people into believing that both the church and marriage need to serve the will of man, not the will of God. So therefore God's will must be subordinate to man's will. What man says is more important. So both institutions that God has given us, the church and marriage, have become man-centered rather than God-centered and both are committed to man and his needs, not God and his glory. Folks, any institution or any person that refuses to give God glory by being obedient to his will will ultimately fail and become the object of divine wrath. Well, there are thousands of examples of how Satan strategizes to thwart the purposes of God and somehow bring glory to himself and so for this reason, Jesus prays that the Father will keep his disciples from the evil one. "Father, protect them

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# Jesus' Heart Revealed in Prayer

By David Harrell

**Bible Text:** John 17:6-19  
**Preached on:** Sunday, June 28, 2015

from all of his deceptions, his temptations, his persecutions, that might rise to such a level as to bring them to ruin in their faith."

Then he says in verse 16, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." We are told in other places in Scripture, for example in Romans 12:2, that we are "not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Literally, "Do not allow the spirit of the age that is prevalent within this world system to conform you, to squeeze you into its mold, to make you think and act like it." It can happen without you realizing it and this is what Jesus is concerned about and how tricky the enemy is. I am reminded of an old Puritan proverb that goes something like this: a boat in the water is all well and good but when water gets in the boat, it will sink. We are a boat that floats aloft the waters of this world but when we allow the world to get into the boat, we are in big trouble. Dear friends, never underestimate the power of Satan. Never underestimate the power of your own flesh to be seduced by his temptations and to bring you to a place of unimaginable misery. Satan possesses supernatural powers. He is a genius beyond genius and he rules a massive host of demons that seek our destruction but we can be thankful that God protects us by his power else we would be destroyed.

So in light of all of this, I marvel at how our Savior loves to bring us before the throne of grace and to plead on our behalf, knowing our great need. I can hear him saying almost, "Father, look at my servant, David, that pastor at Calvary Bible Church. See his great weaknesses. See his besetting sins. See the great peril that he is in and he is not even aware of most of it. O Father, protect him from himself. Protect him from the evil one that would bring him to ruin." This is how he prays for us, dear friends. This is what we see pictured here.

Well, Jesus prays not only for their spiritual preservation but secondly, for their spiritual consecration, in other words, their sanctification. He says in verse 17, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." In other words, "Father, set them apart from sin unto holiness, unto you, for your glory, for their joy. Make them holy." And what is the instrument of sanctification? It's the inspired, infallible, inerrant, authoritative, all-sufficient word of God that is revealed in the Old and the New Testament. The agent of regeneration is the Spirit of God. The instrument of regeneration and sanctification is the word of God. By the way, folks, this is why your own private worship, your own private study in the word of God is so important and also this is why it is so important to subject yourself to the public, systematic, in-depth preaching and teaching of the word of God. This is essential for your spiritual growth and only when we have a firm grasp of Scripture and only when we yield ourselves to the word and the will of God can the Spirit use us and send us out into this hostile world.

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This is what we see in verse 18, "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world." So he says, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth." Indeed, Jesus had consecrated himself wholly to perfectly obey the Father's will which brought great glory to the Father and he wants us to do the same. He wants us to be salt and light in a world that is decaying and is lost in darkness. But folks, this is not going to happen apart from the power of God as he uses his word to conform us into the image of Christ and to sanctify us and so he prays for their spiritual preservation and their spiritual consecration.

Well, there is so much here. I have no time to summarize anything else but I want to leave you with something that came to my mind as I was meditating upon these truths. A song came to mind, one that I learned when I was a little boy but one that I now understand as a man. You probably know it,

"Jesus loves me, this I know,  
for the Bible tells me so.  
Little ones to him belong;  
we are weak, but he is strong."

How vividly we see this in our Lord's high priestly prayer.

In closing, I want to appeal to those of you who struggle with this doctrine that somehow says that a person can lose their salvation. I would encourage you to rethink what has been stated here, restudy this passage. Those of you who believe that somehow by your own will you can overpower the Father's possession of you, that by your own will you can override his elective grace, that somehow on your own you can reject being a part of that love gift that the Father would give to his Son, that somehow the Father's power, the Father's name is unable to keep you. Those of you who would therefore claim maybe unwittingly that Jesus' atoning work on the cross for all whom the Father had given him was ineffective and his subsequent intercession for you deficient. Those of you who would somehow believe that the word and the indwelling Spirit is incapable of bringing you to conformity to Christ. Dear friend, if you believe these things and you truly belong to Christ, I would appeal to you on the basis of the word of God and if I can summarize this way: as we look at this text, we see that all the forces of the Triune Godhead have been brought to bear to give you eternal life and there is nothing that you can do to separate yourself from the love of God. You can do no more to lose your salvation than you did to gain it.

Well, in light of all that we have meditated upon today, I wish to quote the profound lyrics of Augustus Toplady's hymn that we sung earlier; we sang part of the lyrics. He

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was an 18<sup>th</sup> century Anglican cleric and hymnwriter who along with John Calvin opposed John Wesley's Arminianism and when I came really to the end of my studies of this text, the phrase of that great hymn that he wrote kept coming to my mind, "A Debtor to Mercy Alone," and with this I close.

"A debtor to mercy alone,  
Of covenant mercy I sing;  
I come with your righteousness on,  
My humble offering to bring.  
The judgments of your holy law,  
With me can have nothing to do,  
My Savior's obedience and blood,  
Hide all my transgressions from view.

"The work which His goodness began,  
The arm of Your strength will complete;  
Your promise is Yes and Amen,  
And never was forfeited yet.  
The future or things that are now,  
No power below or above,  
Can make You Your purpose forego,  
Or sever my soul from Your love.

"My name from the palms of Your hands  
Eternity will not erase;  
Imprest on Your heart, it remains  
In marks of indelible grace.  
Yes! I to the end will endure,  
Until I bow down at Your throne;  
Forever and always secure,  
Forever and always secure,  
Forever and always secure,  
A debtor to mercy alone."

Oh, dear friends, may we by the power of the Spirit run after God who loves us with such an infinite love.

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Let's pray together.

*Father, thank you for these eternal truths. I pray that by your grace and the power of your Spirit they will be seeds that will bear much fruit in our hearts for your glory and for our joy. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

We pray you have been edified by this presentation. You have been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources Website at [otcr.org](http://otcr.org).

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