

The Gospel of John

A Perspective on Our Eternal Life

John 17:11-12

INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are continuing in John 17 that records Jesus' "high priestly" prayer. He stops on the way toward the garden of Gethsemane in the dark of the night, still surrounded by the eleven disciples, and He prays this prayer in which He asks the Father on behalf of the disciples and all who will ever believe, to bring them to the fullness of the promised salvation.

Stand and Read Scripture

John 17:11-12 (NASB)

¹¹ I am no longer *going to be* in the world; and *yet* they themselves are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, *the name* which You have given Me, so that they may be one just 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 except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

Prayer

This is the only glimpse in Scripture of what we call the intercessory work of Christ. This is the "much more" work that Paul wrote of in Romans. It is an example of what our Lord is doing now for us.

Romans 5:8 (NASB)

⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Then notice the next phrase: "**Much more then,**"

Wait a minute. How can anything be more than Him dying on the cross for us? Well he says...

Romans 5:9-10 (NASB)

⁹ **Much more** then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. ¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, **much more**, having been reconciled, **we shall be saved by His life.**

What is "much more than His death?"

It is His life! His death provides the atonement for sin, but He now lives to make intercession for us and ensure that we are carried all the way to glory. That is the "much more". His ministry now is to intercede for us.

So when the Lord said on the cross, "**It is finished**," the work of sacrifice was finished, the work of atonement was finished, and the penalty for sin was paid in full. But His work on behalf of elect sinners was not finished. It is going on even now. It began when He went back to heaven and took His place at the right hand of God to intercede for us.

This is the "much more" work. You have a glimpse of it here. Literally in this chapter, we are brought into the heavenly Holy of Holies where the Son comes before His Father on behalf of His own. Let me give you a little bit of a background to help you understand this.

Do you remember the exodus from Egypt? When they came out of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea, they arrived in the wilderness where they wandered for forty years living in tents. They would stop and the twelve tribes would pitch their tents around a larger tent. That was God's tent. God's tent was the largest tent and the one to which they focused their attention. It represented the presence of God.

In the middle of that tent, also called the tabernacle, there was a small tent right in the center of the tabernacle, and it was called the Holy of Holies. It symbolized the presence of God. The Holy of Holies contained the **ark of the covenant** and on top of it was the **mercy seat**. The presence of God was not accessible to the people, except for once a year on the Day of Atonement when the High Priest was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies. He would take with him two things. He would take with him the blood of the animal sacrifice to be poured out on the altar, and he would take with him incense, symbolizing prayer. His responsibility on the Day of Atonement was then to provide the sacrifice of atonement, and to offer incense as prayer. He would take the blood of a slain animal to symbolize the atonement for the sins of the nation, and the incense as the symbol of offering prayer to God to forgive the people on the basis of the atonement.

He was given a very important garment that was placed on the front; and then above that, two shoulder pieces that were joined together. On the shoulder pieces were two onyx stones with names of six tribes of Israel engraved on each. The point of that was this: the high priest carried the nation on his shoulders when he went in to make atonement and to offer prayer, literally carrying all the twelve tribes of Israel. This was one man offering one sacrifice and one prayer for the whole people of God. He went in to offer the sacrificial blood. He went in to offer prayer for their forgiveness. He sprinkled the blood and waved the incense and left.

This is a picture of what we find in John 17. Here we have the **great** High Priest, and **He** will enter the ultimate Holy of Holies after His ascension which is in the actual presence of God and He has on His shoulders all His people. He bears them all before God. He has offered His own blood on the heavenly mercy seat as the one true atonement for sin; and now He carries on holy shoulders, above His loving heart, all His people, to offer prayers to God on their behalf. Atonement has been made and prayer is now offered.

When the high priest went into the Holy of Holies, he only stayed for a short time and came back out. When Jesus ascended into heaven, He went into the true Holy of Holies and sat down on the right hand side of God and He is still there making intercession for us. He will be there until all believers are finally gathered into eternal glory. As our great High Priest, He carries us into the very presence of God.

We are on His shoulders. But even more importantly, we are **in** Him. When He is there in the presence of the Father, we are **THERE in Him**. We are loved by the Father the same way the Father loves the Son.

You may say, "Wait a minute, that's got to be stretching it a bit it don't you think?"

NO! Go down to verse 21 of this prayer...

John 17:21-23 (NASB)

²¹ that they may all be one; just as You, Father, *are* in Me and I in You, **that they also may be in Us**, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

²² The glory which You have given Me I also have given to them, so that they may be one, just as We are one; ²³ **I in them and You in Me**, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, **and You loved them, just as You loved Me**.

This is an astounding reality. We are loved as the Son because we are **in** the Son.

That truth is all over the New Testament. The writers of the epistles of the New Testament talk often about being in Christ. "We are in Christ." What that means is exactly what it says. We are in Him loved as He is loved. We are in Him righteous as He is righteous. We are in Him blessed as He is blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ. The Father loves the Son infinitely and eternally; and because we are in the Son, He loves us infinitely and eternally. We are as accepted as the Son is accepted: "**This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.**" **We are in Him, loved as He is loved!**

So our Lord then, beginning in verse 11 and ending in verse 19, starts to ask for some specific things for them and us. We will only have time for two of them this morning. The first being Spiritual Security.

BODY:

I. SPIRITUAL SECURITY.

John 17:11a (NASB)

¹¹ I am no longer *going to be* in the world;...

He is anticipating His departure. In about six weeks He would ascend into heaven and He would be gone. In just a few hours, He would be under the wrath of God. They need to be guarded while He is suffering for sin, and they need to be guarded after He's gone, "because - " as verse 11 says...

John 17:11b (NASB)

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

What is the world?

It is the system of sin that literally controls the world under the leadership of Satan and his demons. That is the world. The world is dark, the world is demonic, the world is dangerous, the world is deadly." He has already told them several times that the world would hate them because it hated Him. This is a dangerous place for the children of God.

They can't survive without divine support. The temptations of Satan are overwhelmingly powerful and they need divine protection.

"They are in the world – " He says " – and I come to You." And He is talking, obviously, about His ascension.

John 17:11c (NASB)

...Holy Father...

Why Holy Father? God is absolutely holy. He cannot tolerate sin. He is angry with the wicked every day. He cannot look on evil. This is the Holy Son, the Holy Child, praying to the Holy Father. It is the desire of the Holy Son and the desire of the Holy Father to protect the unholy men that they call their own. That is what is happening here. He says "Holy Father" because it just makes a stark contrast between who God is, who Christ is, and who we are.

Why would the Holy Father care about unholy sinners?

Answer: Because they are in His Son. They are in Christ. When Christ comes into His presence, we come on Him and in Him. He continues...

John 17:11d-12a (NASB)

...Holy Father, keep them in Your name, *the name which You have given Me*, so that they may be one just 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,...

Jesus asks the Father to keep them safe. Not because they deserve it, but because they belong to You. They are Yours. They are Your sons and daughters.

We are going to see an illustration of how God protected the eleven disciples in the next chapter. They come to arrest Jesus and they also want to arrest the disciples. God does not allow that to happen because it could have destroyed their faith.

Jesus is about to come under the weight and burden of our sin and the Father needs to guard them for those hours. And then when He comes back to heaven, the Father needs to continue to guard them, which He promises to do through the Holy Spirit, whom He gives to every believer.

John 17:11-12b (NASB)

and not one of them perished except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

And by the way, while I was guarding them – " He said " – "**not one of them perished.**"

Now, if the sentenced ended there, we would have a problem: "None of them perished." We would all be saying, "Wait, wait a minute. There is only eleven here. What about Judas? Isn't Judas proof that a disciple, a visible associate of Jesus, a preacher for God, can be lost? Isn't Judas the prototype of a believer who is saved and then loses salvation because he turns and rejects the Lord he once confessed?"

Some would say this is proof that once a person is saved they are always saved.

John 6:70-71 (NASB)

⁷⁰ Jesus answered them, “Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve? And *yet* one of you is a devil.” ⁷¹ Now He meant Judas *the son* of Simon Iscariot; for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.

Jesus knew that Judas would betray him. He also says that Judas is a devil. Does that mean he was never in a saved position? God knows what our decisions in life will be just as we know who has won each of the super bowls in the past. What if one of the Chief's players had not had his foot over the line of scrimmage when we played Boston a couple of years back. We ran for a first down but it was nullified by the penalty. We would have won the game, but we ended up going into overtime, lose the coin flip, and lose the game without even having a chance to run the ball. But his foot **was** over the line and single-handedly caused us to lose. Judas could not make a different decision because, just like our footballs games in the past, God already knew what he would decide to do.

Our Lord prayed for our spiritual security. Then He prays for our Spiritual Unity.

II. SPIRITUAL UNITY.

This is just briefly stated in verse 11, and it will come up again in verses 21-23.

John 17:11b (NASB)

...keep them in Your name, *the name* which You have given Me, **so that they may be one just as We are.**

This is not talking about us getting along with each other in the church. That is a different issue. We need to have a real, practical, living unity among believers. But this prayer goes beyond that. His prayer is that we may be one even as God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one.

I want you to listen carefully.

Salvation is not **just** a ticket to heaven. It is not **just** forgiveness of sins. It is not **just** escape from punishment. It is God pulling us into the **eternal life** of the Trinity. All of us who are forgiven of our sins are literally pulled into the life of the Trinity. We are **in** the Father; we are **in** the Son; and we are **in** the Spirit. It is also true that the Father is in us; the Son is in us; the Spirit is in us.

We have seen that all through this section of John. We are one with Christ. That is why Paul says...

Galatians 2:20 (NASB)

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

I am in the Father and the Father is in me. I am in Christ and Christ is in me. I am in the Spirit and the Spirit is in me. That is why when we talk about joy and peace a little later, we have peace and joy because we have Jesus' peace and joy within us.

CONCLUSION:

What does it mean to be in Jesus?

It literally means that God loves us with such an infinite love, that He loves us the same as He loves His own Son, with an eternal and infinite love, and with that love pulls us into the very Trinity. That is what this prayer is about.

So our Lord goes into the Holy of Holies, bears us on His shoulders, comes before the Father who loves us as much as He loves the Son, and prays to the loving Father to do what He has already determined to do. He prays in perfect accord with the will of God to bring about our spiritual safety and our spiritual unity. We are literally drawn into an **eternal** love relationship with the Trinity.

This is something that I often questioned when I read John 3:16.

John 3:16 (NASB)

¹⁶“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have **eternal life**.”

I understood that we will have eternal life with God in Heaven if we are saved. But I also knew that even the unsaved would have an eternal life. Their lives would be eternally separated from God once they were judged. So why wouldn't John 3:16 say something like eternal life with God in Heaven?

The reason is because the eternal life that Jesus gives us is not **just** a future thing. As a Christian, we already have eternal life in us, because Jesus, Who is eternal life, resides within us. **John actually gives us the definition of eternal life.**

John 17:2-3 (NASB)

²just as You gave Him authority over all mankind, so that to all whom You have given Him, **He may give eternal life.** ³**And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.**

We have eternal life within us **if** we know the Father and believe in His Son. Those who do not believe will live under the wrath of God forever.

John 3:36 (NASB)

³⁶The one who believes in the Son has eternal life; but the one who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.”

The sinner will experience eternal spiritual death. In this world we are all dead in sin. It is only through the blood of Christ that we can receive spiritual life. Although both the unsaved and the saved will experience physical death, only the unsaved will face a second death of which we do not have to fear.

If God has given us over to Christ and if we were selected before the foundations of the world, then we have eternal life, and Christ will protect us. So we live here to the glory of the God and Christ; and **the Lord will, one day, bring us to full glory forever.**

Family of God.