

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

The Why and the What

John 17:9-12

Intro: As we are dealing with the Lord's High-priestly prayer, we have come to the section in which Jesus begins to pray for His disciples. In the first few verses (6-8) we were given a picture of salvation from God's point of view in that the disciples were God's, they were given to Jesus, He manifested (revealed) the name of God to them and they received this revelation meaning their obedience to it involved commitment and change. We were then presented an image of salvation from man's point of view in that the disciples were given God's Word, they received it and were convinced of the truth of Who Jesus was and they believed on Him in faith and their subsequent actions proved it.

Now Jesus continues His prayer for His disciples and here again, just as in the previous section, we get a glimpse of the heart of Jesus, we are given the privilege of seeing just what He thought about His disciples, to what extent He cared for these men – which is a reflection on what He thinks and how much He cares for those who follow Him today. In our text today, we are going to discover exactly why Jesus prays for these men and we'll also see what He petitions the Father for on their behalf.

9-10- First off, let's take note of what Jesus is saying here. He's not saying that He never prays for the world or that the world is beyond His love. On the contrary, not only do we know that He loves the world (Jn 3:16) but He taught His disciples to pray for their enemies (Mt 5:44) and did the same Himself (Lk 23:34). Besides, ch17 makes it clear that Jesus came with a mission to the world and the disciples were now going to carry on that mission. Jesus is simply making a distinction here between His disciples and the world. The world is going to be reached through the disciples and Jesus is specifically praying for those who have been given this important task. He is praying for those who would carry His message of love and redemption into the world.

While the exclusiveness of this prayer may put off some people, it shouldn't. On the one hand, this is a reminder of the unique position in which every believer stands in relation to Jesus. We are His people and He is our Lord.

He has given everything to acquire us to Himself; He has paid the ultimate sacrifice. Because of this we must constantly strive to honor His sacrifice by our attitudes and actions. We must strive to never desecrate His sacrifice through a callous disregard of spiritual things or by allowing sin to reign in our lives.

Of course, the most interesting thing about this passage is not that they are part of a prayer for His own disciples but that they actually reveal to us, from the Lord's own divine perspective, why He prays for them. The 1st reason Jesus gives for praying for these men is because they belong to the Father. This means Jesus values these men simply because they belong to God. We can understand this from our own experience if you've ever been responsible to care for something that belongs to someone else, you tend to value it more just because it belongs to that person.

Jesus was praying for these men because they belonged to God and Jesus is concerned about what is God's. This should be a wonderful thought for us as well as a little convicting – this is also why we should value other Christians. There's also another side to this reason for if Jesus values the disciples because they belong to the Father, we should also understand that the Father values them as well. We are valued by the Father!

Even though we've been given to Jesus, as He says 7 times in this prayer, the Father still has a continuing interest in us. we can illustrate this by looking at the church as the bride of Christ. A human father who gives away his daughter will still have an ongoing concern for her safety and well being to the point of offering assistance wherever needed, even if he doesn't care much for her husband. That's the kind of compassion involved here. Jesus is interested in us because we belong to the Father and the Father is interested in us and values us because we are His possession.

Jesus' 2nd reason for praying for the disciples is seen in the last part of vs9 and the first half of vs10. Jesus refers to an interest in us that He and the Father share together. Everything that belongs to the Father belongs to the Son and everything that belongs to the Son belongs to the Father. Their interest in us is held jointly and equally. This may be comforting in itself but the text suggests a second level attributed to this point of mutual interest.

Notice how the pronouns "they", "Mine" and "Yours" are thrown together.

This alludes to the fact that those who are His are wrapped up in the same ball of life as the Godhead and Jesus prays for us accordingly. This means that our concerns, however small, are God's concerns; and God's concerns, however noble and beyond our understanding, are our concerns. Part of this is easy to understand—God's concerns are ours in the sense that they're for our good and affect us, just as the decisions of a head of state might affect each citizen of his country. The other part is more difficult to accept: that our concerns, however small, are God's; but that doesn't mean it's not so. If God's numbered the very hairs of your head without forgetting or neglecting the weightier issues of the universe then we can accept and be comforted in knowing that our petty concerns are important to Him simply because we are important to Him.

The 3rd reason Jesus prays for them is because He is glorified in them. How, exactly, is Jesus glorified in us?

1) He's glorified by saving us. It's His doing, and the glory of it must rightly and inevitably go to Him. We see this evidenced everywhere in the lives of many great sinners who have become great saints, from the woman who washed His feet with her tears to the heroin addict who is delivered by power and grace and set on the path of righteousness. Your testimony may not be that dramatic but it's in no way less glorifying.

2) Jesus is glorified by our trusting Him in this life. What God wants most, in all the world, is to be believed; to be trusted." Do you really trust and believe him? Not if you're in the habit of complaining about your circumstances. Not if you're always worried about the future or fret over small disappointments every day. No, you trust and glorify Jesus when you recognize you belong to Him and determine to only go His way.

3) Jesus is glorified by us when we live a holy life. Holiness is the attribute of God most mentioned in the Bible. To hear most people talk about God today you'd think love was the attribute most mentioned about Him but it's not. Now, love is a wonderful attribute. It's all the more so because we don't deserve it. But for all its wonder, love is still not the attribute of God most mentioned in the Bible – holiness is . So if we would glorify Jesus, we must make His holiness known by living upright and dedicated lives, by His power. If we live in spiritual adultery, compromising with the values of our society, if the priorities of the lost culture around us become our priorities, we're not living in a way that glorifies Him. But if the priorities of the Word of

God matter to us and we strive for holiness in our lives, then we will bring glory to Him.

4) Jesus is glorified by our confession of Him. It's important to believe on Jesus as Savior and trust Him. It's also equally important to live a holy life. But along with these, we must also testify to His grace, simply because we're called to be witnesses and we have something fantastically great to talk about.

5) Jesus is glorified by our efforts to extend His kingdom, not just by our speech but also by our activity. The Body of Christ needs to wake up to the need for the gospel in our community and around the world. We need to wake up to the calling of the Holy Spirit in the area of our own service to God's kingdom. Jesus is glorified when we step out in faith to do the good works the Father has prepared for us to do. We can't shirk our God-given responsibilities and leave them for someone else to do and expect to glorify Jesus.

11-12- we've discussed the why of the Lord's prayer for His disciples, now we'll look at the what – what does He pray on their behalf for? This is the 2nd petition of His prayer. In vs1-5, Jesus had prayed for Himself, that He might be glorified by the Father. Now, He prays for the disciples and His petition to the Father is for their safekeeping. While this is both comforting and encouraging, it also points to the real, 2-fold danger that these men faced.

1st, although Jesus was leaving to go to the Father, these men were not; they would remain in the world. While Jesus was with them, He was their first and last line of defense. If they were threatened, He was there to receive the blows. If they were hated, He was there to let that hate be directed on Himself. Now He's going away and the hate that had previously been directed against Jesus would soon fall directly and in equal measure on these disciples. He had warned them of this earlier (**15:20-21**) but now He prays for them in light of this danger.

The 2nd aspect of the danger the disciples faced is in the fact that apart from God's perseverance, they would surely be lost. This is why Jesus mentions Judas here. Don't misunderstand what Jesus is saying here. Judas is not brought forth as an exception of God's perseverance with His saints. It's not like God abandoned Judas for the sake of an OT prophecy. No, Judas never

was one of Christ's own. Jesus had faithfully kept all that the Father had given to Him but Judas had never been given to Him. Judas was not a believer, he'd never been cleansed; he hadn't been among the chosen. He's an example of one who pretends to have salvation but is finally exposed as a fraud.

The case of Judas does not teach that a born-again person can be lost. But it does teach what would inevitably happen if God didn't regenerate a person and then keep in His care the one who has been regenerated. If it weren't for God, who could stand? Who could survive the onslaughts of the world if God didn't keep us? But God does keep us – that's the point of the text and the object of the Lord's petition. While Jesus was here, He kept those whom God had entrusted to Him, and He kept them well. None was lost. Now He's returning to the Father so He recommit those He had cared for back into the Father's keeping.

This theme occurs throughout the OT in various images. In [Ps 121](#), the image is that of a divine watchman or protector. Here, the words "keep" or "preserve" occur 6 times. Another important passage is [Ez 34:11-16](#). In the verses just before this, God speaks against those who were supposed to be the shepherds of Israel, her leaders. They hadn't done their work properly. Now, God says He will be a good shepherd to them Himself. In [Isa 27](#) God's keeping power is compared to the care of a husbandman for his vines. "In that day sing to her, a vineyard of red wine! I, the LORD, keep it; I water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I keep it night and day." ([2-3](#)).

These were the images that Jesus drew from as He prayed for His people. In fact, He had lived these images Himself. During the days of His earthly ministry He had been the watchman, the shepherd, the husbandman. Now the disciples were to be committed to the Father—Israel's great watchman, shepherd, and husbandman. How could they be any safer? Yes, the danger outside was great but the danger inside was even greater for they all possessed an old nature that would certainly drag them down into sin again and again. But, the One who watched over them was greater than even this danger. And He would keep them, even as he had promised to keep and did keep Israel.

Twice Jesus refers to the disciples being kept in the Father's name? What does that mean? Earlier, we learned that the phrase "the name of God" is a

reference to the attributes of God. Thus, to be protected by the name is to be protected by the One who is sovereign, holy, all-knowing, wise, compassionate, and anything else that can properly be said of God. But there's more to this, to be kept "in the name" is not just to be kept by a God who is some distant force that can be called in to defend us when necessary. The truth is: we're actually already in Him, just like being in a fortress. His power and other attributes surround us constantly as **Pr 18:10** teaches, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe."

Can anything touch us when we are in that fortress? As Christians, we are safe; not because of ourselves (we're weak) but because we are kept by Jesus Christ and the Father. Only God is for us thus, we should seek to please God. We should also seek to persevere since we learned perseverance from Him. The way of true discipleship is a long obedience in the same direction. We should persevere in our work, our witness and our ministry. Sometimes the situation seems hopeless. But it's never hopeless to God so we shouldn't allow it to be hopeless for us. We must not give up. We must not quit. God is faithful. He is our keeper, and with God all things are possible.

In our text we see Jesus praying for us and giving reasons for His prayer: because we belong to the Father, because He and the Father have a mutual interest in us, and because He is glorified in us. But it's not just Jesus who has a ministry of intercession; we have one too. We're supposed to pray for others and for the very same reasons.

1) We pray for other Christian because they belong to the Father and are valued by Him. What belongs to the Father and is valued by Him should be valued by us too! How do we view our fellow believers? As opportunities for service or excuses for not serving (someone else will do it)? Do we view them as assets to the Body of Christ or as burdens? Would to God that we would view them and value them as God does! That will drastically change our assessments!

2) We pray for others because all Christians are bound up in the life of God together. When the Lord calls a person to faith in Himself He doesn't just call them to an individual relationship alone, He also calls them into the church. He takes people from every nation, race, culture, and education and

puts them together into one body to show that the binding principle is the love of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit within them. We're all in this together, like it or not. So, pray for one another, because their success is our success, and their failure is our failure.

3) We pray for others because God is glorified in them. Not matter what church or denomination they go to, if they are a child of God, God has called them so that He might do something unique in them that they might bear a valued witness. No matter who they are or what circumstances they are in, God has a plan for them to glorify Him. Should we not be in the habit of praying in that direction? Wouldn't God be quick to answer our prayers when they're offered in His name, in submission to His authority and according to His will?

Could it be that our prayers are rarely answered because we are praying for the wrong things? Praying in the wrong direction? Jesus gives us a privileged glimpse into His heart in this prayer; should we do any less than try to emulate Him in our own prayers? 😊