

# "Father, Keep Them" - Secure Within Christ's Intercession

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[ 0 : 01 ] Now if we turn to John 17 tonight, I'm going to read first of all the passage that we're going to look at in John 17, and that's from verse 11 down as far as verse 16. If I read through it first of all, and then we'll look at some of the content of that.

And I'm no longer in the world, but they are in the world. And I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one even as we are one. While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost, except the son of destruction, that the scripture might be fulfilled.

For now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

[ 1 : 06 ] It's very understandable that the disciples would be anxious, and somewhat puzzled indeed, about the way in which Christ was going to leave them, as he was teaching them through these chapters, even of the necessity of his leaving of them.

We know something of what that might have felt like ourselves. Most of us have had to face the problem, and the difficulty, and the pain of loved ones being taken from us by death, and into eternity, and the prospect of having them no longer with us for all that they were doing for us, no longer hearing their voice, and all the difficulty that is involved in that.

And it would be something like that for the disciples. Jesus had been with them these years. He'd been teaching them. They'd seen his miracles. They appreciated his presence. They depended on him for so many things.

And now he was saying to them, I'm no longer going to be with you, but it's actually going to be better for you, because I am going to the Father, and I'm going to send the Helper or the Comforter, the Holy Spirit.

And that's really what's in the background, and sometimes at the forefront, foreground, of chapters 13 to 16. All the way through these chapters, you can see how the prospect of Jesus not being with them, is something that he wants to actually bring them into and teach them.

[ 2 : 32 ] For example, chapter 14, verses 25 to 27. If we just pick a couple of those very well-known verses, I'm sure. Chapter 14, verse 25.

These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. Not as the world gives you do I give you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. So there is Jesus specifically addressing the issue of his leaving, and how that's in fact going to lead to the Spirit coming, and also that his peace will be something that they will appreciate and experience.

You have the same in chapter 16 and verses 5 to 7. What do you find there? That now I am going, he says, to him who sent me, and none of you asks me, where are you going?

Because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away. For if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you.

[ 3 : 44 ] But if I go, I will send him to you. And at this stage, of course, they couldn't appreciate, as they would later after his resurrection especially, they couldn't appreciate how it could possibly be the case that his physical absence was actually going to be, in a sense, a better situation for them than what he was now saying would be the case.

And that Jesus actually no longer being with them is very much also in his mind in this prayer that the disciples be kept. You can see that that's really one of the strings that runs through these verses in this passage.

And three or four times you find it, the Lord saying, keep them. Keep them in your name. Keep them in. I have kept them in your name. I guarded them. And then fourthly, keep them from the evil one. So the matter of them being kept, kept by God the Father as he's praying to them here, is something that is really keyed in very closely to the fact that he is not physically going to be with them and that they're going to face a situation in the world entirely new when they will ultimately take the gospel and take the message of Jesus out into that hostile world that's just waiting for them outside that upper room.

And so I want to tonight just to look at this matter of Christ's prayer for the keeping of the disciples and how that translates into or continues into our understanding of Christ, keeping ourselves and our need of that.

[ 5 : 16 ] Keep them, he says, in your name. And then he says, secondly, keep them from the evil one. Keep them in your name and keep them from the evil one.

Let's look at the first of those first of all. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me. Holy Father is a description of God or a title given to God.

Here only in the New Testament you find that term used for God. It's not a legitimate name for the Pope, although historically the Pope has given himself the name of Holy Father and that's how he still is addressed to this day.

There is only one Holy Father and that is God the Father. And the fact that this is used here specifically by Jesus to address his Father really puts a guard on that name, a name that belongs to God alone.

And the fact that he's joining these two words, Holy and Father, together in his address to the Father, reminds us of two things really in that. I'm just going to mention them.

[ 6 : 24 ] They're known to you anyway. The title, the name Holy Father, first of all, in the sense of being a Holy Father, being a Holy Father, reminds us and teaches us of the awesome distance between ourselves and God, between even the holiest human being on earth and God the Father.

And you could see in a sense the holiest human being in heaven, apart from Jesus himself, the distance still between a created being and God the Holy Father.

And it's an awesome distance, a distance that we come to realize as we confess our sin to him and as the Bible brings his holiness to bear upon our understanding.

That's the first thing in Holy Father, but it's the word Father as well, because as well as the awesome distance between ourselves and God, there is also wonderfully a familial closeness. He is distant in his holiness from us, but he is so close to us in the familial sense, in the fatherly sense, in the sense in which he is indeed a spiritual father to his people.

[ 7 : 33 ] So both of these issues are combined in this address by Jesus as he addresses the Father and says, Holy Father, keep them. And then he says, keep them in your name, which you have given me.

Now we've seen already, verse 6 especially, that the name of God is mentioned, the name of the Father. I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world.

And we saw that the name of God in that context means the revealed character of God. And what Jesus is saying here in the prayer is, you have given this to me, your name.

By which he means, I think, that the character of God the Father has actually come to be revealed to the world and to the disciples especially through Jesus and in Jesus himself.

Remember in chapter 14, the question that was addressed to him, Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us. And Jesus said, have I been with you so long, Philip, and still you do not know me.

[ 8 : 41 ] Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. He said amazing words. When we see Jesus and appreciate the truth as it is in Jesus, we're actually looking at the character of God and God the Father as well as God the Son.

And when he's saying here, keep them in your name. Well, there's a difference of opinion in commentaries as to whether this should be translated, keep them through or by your name or here, keep them in your name.

They're very close together in meaning anyway. Keeping them through your name would be equivalent to keep them in your power, the power of your character, the power of your divine nature, your divine being.

But here it's translated, keep them in your name, which I think is probably the best way of translating the same word. In other words, keep them in your name means something like, Father, keep them faithful within your name, within the truth of your name as I have revealed it, the truth of God as that has been revealed in Jesus.

And all aspects of that truth are what the Son of God wants his people to be kept within. And for them to be kept within the truth, within the boundaries of God's truth, we and they require the keeping of God.

[10:08] We require the ability, the keeping, the power of God himself to keep us within the truth and to keep us from actually straying outside of that.

And I think that's why it's the best way of taking the meaning of that, especially in relation to what follows on from that, where he says, I guarded them and I guarded them and not one of them has been lost, except the son of destruction, that the scripture might be fulfilled.

In other words, when he's saying I guarded them, it's actually a different word to the word keep, but very similar in meaning. The guardianship is the same really in a sense of looking after or keeping secure and not actually giving them to stray beyond the boundaries of the truth itself.

And that's why he's saying I guarded them while I was with them. I guarded them and none of them has been lost. In other words, none of those that are within his guardianship are lost or ever will be lost.

They are within the guardianship of Jesus. They are within the guardianship of the Father. He's praying here the Father will keep them in a similar manner to which he has guarded them while he was with them in this world.

[11:33] None of them has fallen away and been lost. Then it says, except the son of destruction or the old way of it is the old translation, the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled.

I don't particularly like the word except in that context in the ESV. The older translation has but, so it runs, not one of them is lost, but the son of perdition, son of destruction.

And I think the best way is to take it as the word but, because the word except gives you the impression that the guarding of Jesus has been successful apart from this one individual.

I have guarded them. None of them is lost except the son of destruction. Whereas when you take it in the word, with the word but, it runs something like this. While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me.

I have guarded them and not one of them has been lost, but the son of destruction has been lost, that the scripture might be fulfilled. Now the son of destruction, as you well know, is Judas Iscariot.

[12:49] That's the name that Christ gave to him here. And it's like the description of the Antichrist in 2 Thessalonians 2 and verse 3. So what Jesus is referring to really, in a sense, is that this Judas, this Judas Iscariot, by whose evil action Jesus came to be betrayed into the hands of those who then ultimately came to crucify him.

The son of destruction and son of perdition really shows that the spirit of Judas is the same in kind. He has a kinship of spirit with the devil.

His actions served, at that stage, the purposes of the devil in actually bringing Jesus and betraying him to the authorities.

But you see, he's saying that the scripture might be fulfilled. And that powerfully shows us that the reason that Judas is the son of destruction is not because of any failure in the guarding of Jesus, in the ability of Jesus to keep his people.

Go back again to the way that we've translated that. And it's really evident from that, where you say, I kept them in your name, which you have given me, the name you have given me.

[14:13] I have guarded them. Not one of them has been lost. But the son of destruction has been lost so that the scripture might be fulfilled. You see, Judas' betrayal of Jesus and Judas' evil actions did not arise out of any fault with God, any fault with Jesus' ability to keep his disciples.

It arose out of his own choice. He did not betray Jesus because he was chosen by God to do so and had no option. He had his own will.

He had his own mind. He had his own thoughts. He had his privileges along with Jesus' disciples. He had all of that for these years that he was with them. And yet, at the end of the day, he was never a proper disciple spiritually.

He was never in love with Christ. He never committed his life to Jesus. He was the son of perdition. He chose to betray him. He took up kinship of spirit with the devil.

He served his purposes at that point. So, you see, that's such a wonderful way of guarding Jesus' own ability as he guards his disciples.

[15:26] So, when you look at this, what he's saying is that this is now what he's praying for. You are holy father. You are holy, you are holy perfectly. You are father to your children.

Keep them in your name. Keep them in the boundaries of that truth that's revealed as your name through me. That you have given to me.

Even while I was with them, I kept them in your name. And I guarded them. And not one of them has been lost. But the son of destruction was lost.

That the scripture might be fulfilled. So, he's asking the father and praying that his disciples will be kept in his name. And that's something that applies to ourselves this evening as well.

That we come under the provisions of Christ's intercession in principle. This is still what is being prayed for. This is what is being prayed for all of those who trust in Christ as their savior.

[16:31] They come into the provisions of this magnificent intercession. Where there's an ongoing keeping of them. An ongoing presentation by Jesus of himself in heaven.

As the ground for his intercession. For the keeping of his people. That's what's really surrounding you and I tonight. In the many difficulties that we face.

The many challenges. And as we'll see the many ways in which our relationship with the world requires. The keeping of God of us within the boundaries of his truth.

So, he's saying firstly, keep them in your name. And secondly, he's saying keep them from the evil one. Keep them from the evil one.

He goes on to say that he has given them his word. Verse 14. And the world has hated them.

Because they are not of the world. Just as I am not of the world.

[17:33] I do not ask that you take them out of the world. But that you keep them from the evil one. Well, your word, as he says there to the father.

Is the teaching that Jesus was giving. As well as the revelation in his own person. As that had come from the father. He had come from the father. His teaching that was from the father.

This was the word of the father to his people. Expanding on everything that had gone before. And because Jesus had given this word to his disciples. The world has hated them.

A totally contrasting. A totally contrasting. Structures, if you like. Or substances. Or contrast of natures. Between the disciples.

And indeed all of God's born again people. And the world. Because we saw earlier. The world really means in John. What is against God.

[18:31] That human entity. That organized human opposition to God. That is the world. And contrary to that.

Them here. The disciples. Extending that into. All of those who have come to be taken out of the world. And are now living by faith in Christ. That's the opposite of the world.

That's what contrasts. And the world. And God's people. Are completely opposite. In their values. In their outlook. In their aspirations. In their lifestyles.

And so it's inevitable. That you have what Jesus has here. What he's mentioning is. The hatred of the world. Towards. Those people who have come. To be taken out of the world.

And given to Jesus. And live now for him. It's inevitable. When you get two. Mutually opposed worlds. If you like. Or the world. And God's people.

[19:28] That you have a mutual conflict. And you of course know that yourselves. The moment you begin to follow Jesus. You're aware of.

The world's opposition. You're aware that there's a power there. That there's an influence there. That there's an entity there. That doesn't like what you're doing. That doesn't like what you're saying.

That doesn't like what you're suggesting. That doesn't care for your witness. That would like you to be different. That would like you to go back to the world. The way things were. And even if it's not such an out and out hatred.

As results in physical persecution. Though that is often the case. It's still very obvious. That the world. In its movements.

In its conclusions. In its actions. Are acting against God's people. Because they are essentially. The world is. Essentially anti-God.

[ 20 : 24 ] And what is anti-God. Is by nature. And by definition. Against what is pro-God. What is actually. Living for God. And for God's glory.

But you see what he's saying to them. What he's saying. And this is of course in the audience. Of the disciples. Very important. That we realize. The disciples are listening to all of this. They're not asleep.

They're not somewhere else. As Jesus is praying. He's saying this. He's praying this. In their presence. And they would look back. Undoubtedly. Over in years to come.

They would look back. To this really special moment. When they heard Jesus. In this prayer. Addressing the Father. In these terms. What he is saying is.

The world has hated them. Because they are not of the world. Just as I am not of the world. I do not ask. That you take them out of the world. But that you keep them.

[ 21 : 21 ] From the evil one. And by the evil one. Undoubtedly. He means the devil. We could take it in a sense. As generic evil. Or evil in general. But it's more specific.

I think than that. Just as it's translated here. Take them. That you keep them. From the evil one. They will meet. With the devil. In terms of.

His mind. His. His strategies. His methods. They will meet with that. As they go into the world. With the gospel. That's what they're going to be confronting. That's what's going to try.

Always to undo. What they're doing. And here you need to notice. The language of verse 18. As you have sent me. Into the world. So I have sent them.

Into the world. That is why. They need the keeping. Of the father. Because they've been sent. Into the hostile world. With the message. Of the gospel.

[ 22 : 16 ] To bring Jesus. To the world. And in that world. They're going to be hated. And opposed. And therefore. He's praying. I don't pray. That you take them. Out of the world.

Because that will be contrary. To the purpose. Why Jesus sent them. Into the world. They're there. On a mission. As he was on a mission. From the father. In verse 18.

So. They are on a mission. From Jesus. A mission. That. That has the gospel. At its center. Father. And in that. He's saying.

I don't say. I do not ask. That you take them. Out of the world. But I do pray. That you keep them. From the evil one. So. That we must.

Really never. Withdraw. From the world. In the sense. In which we're taking it. Tonight. Withdrawing from the world. Of course. To be seen. To be different. To it's a different concept.

[ 23 : 10 ] But withdrawing. From the world. So as not. Actively. To be serving God. In it. It's not really an option. For us. And the solution. To the world's hatred.

Is not by opting out. Or anything other than. The father's. Protection. That's where the answer. To the opposition.

And the hatred. Of the world is. That you keep them. From the evil one. One of the best commentaries. On the gospel of John.

Is by the American. Theologian. Don Carson. And in regard to this. I thought his words. Were just excellent. And this is what he says. The followers of Jesus.

Are permitted. Neither the luxury. Of compromise. With a world. That is intrinsically. Evil. And under the devil's power. Nor the safety. Of disengagement.

[ 24 : 09 ] If the Christian pilgrimage. Is inherently perilous. The safety. That only God himself. Can provide. Is assured. As certainly.

As the prayers. Of God's own dear son. Will be answered. I think that's a magnificent. Comment. On this part. Of the passage. He's saying.

There were not permitted. The luxury. Either of compromising. With the world. That is intrinsically. Evil. And under the devil's power. Nor are we permitted. The safety.

Of disengaging ourselves. From. From that world. And witnessing to it. And because. The pilgrimage. We're on. Including our service. In the gospel. Is inherently perilous. The safety. That only God himself. Can provide. Is assured us. As certainly. As the prayers. Of God's own dear son. Will be answered.

[ 25 : 05 ] And that's. Such. An assuring word. For you. And for me. Tonight. Whatever your form. Of witness is. Whatever it is. You're serving God.

However you're taking. Jesus. And the message. Of Jesus. And the standard. Of Jesus. To the world. Whether it's in your own home. Or in your neighborhood. Or involved in something. In the church. Now. Especially in the past. When we were able to do this. More fully. It doesn't really matter. What kind of. Involvement it is. In the service of God. In the mission. That he's given us. To go to the world. With the gospel. To witness to him. As the savior. We are absolutely. Assured. Of God's. Protective care. Doesn't mean. We will never die. In his service. That we will never have.

[ 26 : 00 ] Such opposition. As may even put us to death. As happens. In other parts of the world. Frequently. But it does mean. That we are assured. Of the safety.

That within God's own truth. And within. God's own salvation. No one is able to breach. The devil has no. Access. To break. That unity.

That we have with God. And with his son. Now I want to finish by. Just picking up. Two. Points. That is. As well as the prayer. That God will keep.

That the father. Will keep them. In his name. And the prayer. That the father. Will keep them. From the evil one. Through the passage. There is a dual. Purpose.

Or two. Particular purposes. That Jesus has in mind. In these prayers. You could say. That this is Christ's own. Practical application. Of these wonderful. Theological facts.

[ 26 : 56 ] That he is. Setting out for us. And the two. Aspects of that purpose. Or the dual purposes. First of all. That they may be one. He says in verse 11.

Be. That they may be one. As we are one. This is what he is saying. Keep them. In your name. Which you have given me. So that they may be one.

Even as we are one. In other words. This is really. So that the outcome. Of what he is. He is praying for. In the keeping of God. The father. The outcome will be.

Unity. For God's people. For those who live. Faithfully to Christ. And it is interesting. Isn't it? And it is a very deep thing. That our unity.

As Christians. In a spiritual body. That we make up. Is patterned. On the unity. Within the Trinity. Itself. The pattern of unity.

[ 27 : 52 ] Is nothing less than. The unity that you find. In the depths. Of God's own being. The unity of the father. The son. The Holy Spirit. Together. In other words. When he is saying here.

That they may be one. Even as we are one. There are two things. At least. That come into that. You could widen this out. Yourselves. But it includes. Firstly.

A unity. In love. Because that is one of the things. That characterizes. The Godhead. God himself. As the father. The son. And the spirit. Perfect love.

As that is shared. As that is. Engaged. In between the persons. Of the Trinity. The love. That God is. That God is.

Within himself. Between each of these persons. And especially. John. And Jesus. In John. John's. Gospel mentions. The father and son. Relationship.

[ 28 : 48 ] As one of. Of love. Mutually. Between them. So there is a unity. In love there. And that is. The pattern for. The unity is praying for here. That they.

That is us. Christians. May be. One. That we will have. That unity. In love. And it is. It stands to reason. That without love. There can't be unity.

Either inwardly. Or even. An organized. Outward unity. But the second. Aspect of. Of that. Oneness. Is a unity. Of purpose.

There is absolutely. No. Contradiction. Between. The purpose. That God. The father. Has. In sending his son. Into the world. And the purpose.

That is in the son's ministry. In the son's mind. As he's come to fulfill. That mission. And that ministry. There's no conflict. Between. The will of the son. And the will of the father.

[ 29 : 43 ] Between the aim. And the purpose. Of the father. In our salvation. And so our unity. As well. As it's patterned on that. As it's a result of.

What Jesus is praying for. And through. From the keeping. Power of God. That we be kept. So that we will have. That unity. Of purpose.

See that goes back to. Being within the parameters. The boundaries. Of God's truth. It's when we start. Staying outside of that. And. And I don't want to give the impression.

We don't have. Within. God's truth. The facility. Of liberty. Of conscience. That's an area. That we're not going to go into. But. It's important to mention it. But.

The unity of purpose. Is very much to do. With. Remaining within. The. The. The boundaries. Of God's. Own truth. In other words.

[ 30 : 37 ] We are not serving. God's. Purpose. Or even. We could say. We're conflict. With Christ's prayer. If we were to say. That we're still going to be united. But we're now not going to believe.

In a physical resurrection. Of Christ from the dead. That's going outside. Of the boundaries. Of God's truth. As it is in Christ. And so here he is.

Praying that. They. May be one. Even as we are one. Bound together. In a unity of love. And in a unity of purpose. And there's one other.

Matter. The dual purpose. Is not just unity. But also secondly. Joy. Look at verse 13. Where he's saying. While I was with them.

I kept them in your name. And I've guarded them. Not one of them is lost. But now I'm coming to you. And these things. And I think he means. By all of what he's been saying. In these previous chapters.

[ 31 : 33 ] As well. These things. I speak in the world. That they may have my joy. Fulfilled. In themselves. Now what does he mean by that?

Well. Very briefly. If you go back to chapter 15. And you see verses 10. To 11. It gives us a key. I think.

Into what's meant here. Chapter 17. Verse 10. Of chapter 15. If you keep my commandments. You will abide in my love. In other words. That's keeping within the boundaries.

Of God's truth. Just as I have kept my father's commandments. And abide in his love. These things. I have spoken to you. That my joy might be in you.

And that your joy. May be full. In other words. Jesus is tying together. His own relationship. With the father. In obedience. Love.

[ 32 : 31 ] And truth. And. The way in which his people. Are to be bound to the father. And to himself. In obedience.

Love. And truth. And the outcome of that. Is joy. It's a complete mistake. On the part of the world. To say. If you are obedient to Christ.

And live within the boundaries. Of his truth. And your concern. Among others. And a main concern.

You might say. Is to be obedient to Christ. And to your father. You're bound to have a joyless life.

You know that that's not true. It wasn't true for Jesus. And it's not true for his disciples. Indeed. It's the very opposite. There is no joy.

Like knowing. The joy that God gives us. As we live. In obedience to himself. And to the saviour. To Jesus. And in the way that we. Love him.

[ 33 : 29 ] Including the keeping. Of his commandments. As far as that's. Possible for us. So what he's saying is. As it was for Jesus. So it is to be for us.

And this is what he's. Praying for. This is one of the outcomes. Of his prayer. That God will keep his people. So that they will experience. The joy. That comes from obedience.

And love. And that that will be fulfilled. In themselves. Now there's a lot more. In that passage. That I haven't had time. To touch on this evening.

I've touched on enough. And there's a lot of that. That you can. Fill out. Or discuss again. For yourselves. But here are the two. Here is the one.

The main thing. That he's saying. That he's praying for. The father's keeping. Of his people. And he's keeping them. In relation to. The truth. That is revealed in Jesus.

[ 34 : 25 ] Keeping them. Within the boundaries. Of the truth. But he's keeping them also. From the evil one. As they go out. With that truth. Into a hostile. World.

We pray. God will again. Bless to us. This part of his word. Want to. I want to. I want to. I want to. I want to.