

Kept

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn in our Bibles to the passage of Scripture which we read in the Gospel of John chapter 17.

And as God would help me, I'd like to concentrate for a short while on verse 15. John chapter 17 verse 15.

I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. New Christians often ask, why does God not take us instantly to heaven once we're converted?

Especially when Christ let it known that he desired, in verse 24, Father, I desire that they whom you have given me be with me where I am.

[1 : 1 8] When Christ wants his people to be with him, why does God not take us instantly to heaven? And of course, the short answer is that Christianity is not escapism from the world.

Christianity is the conquering of the world. Christianity is the overcoming of evil.

The overcoming of Satan and his design. Christianity is far, far larger. Far, far bigger than simply our salvation.

Just think about it. Just think about it. If the kingdom of heaven was all about our salvation, who is at the center of religion?

We are. The human race would be. God has a much greater plan. The kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, is far greater than salvation of individuals and indeed families.

[2 : 3 6] Of course, God is glorified through that, but there's much more involved. And here, you see, we are told, don't take them out of the world immediately.

I want them to be with me eventually, but there's work to be done first. There's a purpose to be achieved first. Don't take them away instantly.

Think about it. If Christians, immediately they were converted, were taken up into heaven, what would, what would that indicate?

What would that demonstrate? Well, for a start, the main reason for creating human beings on earth would never be accomplished.

God made man in the image of God so that human beings would glorify God on earth.

[3 : 4 3] That was the purpose. That a species would be made in God's image, glorifying God on earth.

Now, Satan, wherever he was, when he saw the image of God on human beings, he detested it.

He hated it. And he said, I'll change that. I'll get these human beings to look like me instead of looking like God.

And we might say how successful he was. How he succeeded in getting the human race to ape the devil instead of being God's vice regents on earth.

Humans, as you know, fell through the temptation of Satan and defaced the image of God on earth.

[4 : 53] You and I have defaced the image of God on us through our sin. God's life. So what did God do?

Did he instantly consign the whole human race to a lost eternity where they ought to be? Where if justice was administered, we would all be?

You know well, God in his mercy did not do that. He predestined. He predestined some to what?

Do you know there's no verse in the Bible which says we were predestined to salvation. What the Bible teaches is that God predestined us to be conformed to the image of his son.

Isn't that interesting? That's the objective that once again human beings who had defaced the image of God that we would once again be like God.

[6 : 10] But what the Bible says were predestined to be conformed to the image of his son. And Christ died and Christ rose from the grave to accomplish God's purpose of recreating humans in the image of God.

Now the first stage of course is our salvation. But that's the beginning. That's not the end. So many people think oh well now that I'm converted that's it.

No it's not. That's it. begun. We've now to become imitators of Jesus Christ. You see there's such a gulf between God in heaven and human beings who've defaced the image of God upon themselves.

There's such a gulf. We've no idea what God looks like. So in his mercy God sent his son so that we could have someone to identify with.

And that's why Jesus has said he that has seen me has seen the father. How do you know what God is like?

[7 : 35] Is there someone here wanting to know what God is like? Have a good long look at his son Jesus Christ.

We're to be conformed to his image. We've been predestined. If we're believers we've been predestined to look like him.

But you know there's another reason that if we were taken instantly out of the world at our conversion just think about it Satan's design to thwart God's purpose would succeed.

It would appear that Satan was more powerful than God. That anything God could do Satan could destroy it. But what says the scripture?

The son of man was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil. We must never think that God and Satan are equal powers.

[8 : 52] They are direct opposites. But never think they are equals. Our Bible tells us good excelleth evil as light excelleth darkness.

Darkness and light are not equals. Darkness cannot penetrate light. But light can penetrate darkness.

darkness. And good can penetrate evil. The definition of darkness is actually the absence of light.

And God is light. And light shines in darkness. darkness. And we're so dark we don't even recognize it.

And we don't even identify with it. We must remember the spiritual warfare is not really between Satan and us.

[10 : 07] Not really. The spiritual warfare is between Satan and God. It is God which Satan hates. It's God's word and it's especially God's work that Satan seeks to destroy.

And he wants you and he wants me on his side against God. Against God. That's what he wants.

That's who the war is between. And you and I the question is we ask don't we is God on our side? Hey wait a minute.

Have we not got it the wrong way? When? Are we not asking the wrong question? The right question is are we on God's side? The wars between God and sin and evil and Satan whose side are we on?

Are we on God's side fighting evil fighting sin? That's a question. But there's another thing to note.

[11 : 21] If we were taken instantly out of the world the moment we were converted and this is probably the most important thing of all. Think about it.

Grace. The grace of God would never be seen as more powerful than evil.

What a tragedy that would be. Grace is more powerful and more glorious than sin. there is nothing more God glorifying Christ exalting devil conquering on earth than human beings remade recreated in the image of God.

That is God glorifying. that is Christ exalting. That is devil conquering.

Somebody on earth resisting temptation that glorifies God. That exalts Christ.

[12 : 51] That conquers Satan. There is nothing he hates more. A human being walking in righteousness.

How that exalts Christ. How that demonstrates that the Son of Man was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil.

Satan still thinks he can get Christians back into his kingdom.

He doesn't understand the nature of grace. He doesn't understand it's forever. He does not understand that he's lost the people forever.

He can't get them back. They've been purchased with the blood of Christ. Satan never tires never weighs.

[14 : 01] We wrestle not against flesh and blood which tire. Do you get tired of doing the same old thing? Not Satan.

Not Satan. He doesn't get tired of doing the same old thing. He can't do anything else but evil. He can't stop it. Do you remember what is said at the end of what we call the temptation of Christ?

Never think there was only three temptations. There were only three temptations recorded.

Satan tempted Christ for forty days and forty nights. And what does it say when Christ at the end of Luke chapter four or Luke chapter nine when Satan went away?

He went away our Bible tells us until another suitable occasion for tempting came back.

[15 : 11] arose. Christ when he left when Satan left tempting Christ it wasn't for good.

It was until another opportune season. And if he came back to tempt Christ do you think he's going to leave you?

Are you going to be more successful than Christ in the wilderness when he resisted the devil? If he came back for him he's going to come back for us. So don't be surprised if Satan keeps coming back to tempt you.

He kept coming back to tempt Christ. Christ. And he's a dirty fighter. He waits till you're sick. He waits till you're tired.

He waits till you're weak. He waits till you're down. He can't do anything else. And he never tires. We're not wrestling against flesh and blood. But against principalities, against powers.

[16 : 22] there's nothing more God glorifying. There's nothing more Christ exalting.

There's nothing more devil conquering than human beings believing in forgiveness. Satan knows nothing about it.

The angels know nothing about it. In the period when angels fell, there was no saviour sent for them.

Satan, the angels stand before God. I think it's John Owen who says Satan, the devil, angels, stand before God individually.

one by one before one. The human race stands before God collectively. Either in Adam or in Christ.

[17 : 40] I think it's John Owen who says if a saviour was to be found for angels, there would have to be one for each individual angel. because they stand before God, angel for angel.

But when God made Adam, he made a covenant with Adam on behalf of the whole human race. And if you're still in Adam, you're finished.

It's too late. Adam blew it on you as well as on himself. but Christians who believe in Christ.

They are in Christ and they stand before God as his people. Who's your representative? Who's your representative?

Adam? Or Christ? In Christ. In Christ. In Christ, we're taken to glory. In him.

[18 : 46] There's an illustration used of people, I think it was doing the West Highland Way, the walk. And there were a gathering there at the starting line and there was one old man seen there.

He was old, he was bent, he was crippled, he had a stick, he had a bag and he was hobbling away and they said, this man's not going to make the starting line, never mind the finishing line.

Well, when they arrived at the end, one of the first, one of the first people of the service, this old man with his haversack and his walking stick bent and crippled.

And they couldn't understand how he made it. And they said to him, how did you make it? Oh, he said, I came on the bus.

I could never make it. I could never make it. My friend, you'll never make it if you're not a Christian. You need to be in Christ. He takes you to heaven.

[19 : 54] We're in him. It's not how well we do, it's how well he did. Once and for all. And God said, this is my beloved son.

in whom I'm well pleased. Are you well pleased with him? Are you looking for something else? There is nothing else.

And you don't need anything else. You only need him. Christ got the victory at Calvary. Not sin, not Satan.

Satan made the biggest mistake he ever made. at the place called Calvary. Christ had the victory. Christ dismissed his own spirit.

His spirit wasn't taken from him. He bowed his head and dismissed his spirit. He was in total control. Are we in Christ?

[20 : 59] Or are we not? And you see, this is what he prays for. He wrote in verse 24, I desire that they also whom you have given me be with me where I am. Why? To see my glory.

You know, I find it so humbling to read, to think, that Christ, you know, Christ is looking forward more to having us in heaven than we are.

Ephesians 5, 27. So that he might present the church to himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

He's looking forward to that. That great day when the whole universe, every angelic being, every demon will watch and Christ will say when he presents his church, his people conformed to his image and say to the demons, look at the job I made of them.

They're pure now. I've sanctified them fully. I prayed, don't take them out of the world until I've sanctified them fully.

[22 : 32] And only at death, only at death are we made perfect in righteousness. Do you know there's more glory, more glory given to God through our repentance and faith in Christ than if we kept the whole law of God perfectly all our lives.

You want to glorify God? You're conscious of your sin, you're convicted of your sin, you say how can I glorify God? By repenting and believing.

Isn't that a fantastic thought? We glorify God more by trusting his son, by repenting and believing on him, we glorify God more by doing that than if we kept the whole law perfectly all our lives.

That's a fantastic thought. That's glory. That's the glory which Christ purchased for his people. and how he's looking forward, as Jude says, to present us faultless or blameless before the presence of his glory.

That's what's ahead of you if you're a Christian. That's what's ahead of me if I'm a Christian. He's going to present us faultless and blameless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

[24 : 14] I can't understand how, but I don't need to understand how, but I need to believe it and you need to believe it.

He'll have exceeding joy in presenting his people remade in the image of his son.

God, the Holy Spirit, make his word, his truth effectual to every one of us.

Let's bow our heads. Our gracious Father in heaven, we just pray that you would take the things of Christ and make them ours here tonight for your glory, for his name's sake.

He is worthy. he is worthy. He finished the work given him to do, and it was on behalf of sinners like us.

[25 : 15] So hear us in mercy, answer us in peace, as we pray only and all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

we'll conclude our meeting by singing to God's praise from Psalm 36, which speaks about the glory, page 252.

Page 252. The last five stanzas of Psalm 36. They with the, that's verse 8, Psalm 36, that's verse 8.

they with the fatness of thy house shall be well satisfied. From rivers of thy waters, of thy pleasures, thou wilt drink to them provide.

Psalm 36, verse 8, to the end. Amen. They with the fatness of thy house shall be well satisfied from rivers of thy pleasure, pleasure, Lord, will drink to heaven provide.

[26 : 46] Because of life the fountain pure remains alone with thee, and in the pure sight of time, we clearly light shall see.

Thy loving kindness unto them continue that they know, and still the men of bright in heart, thy righteousness bestow.

Let not the food of cruel pride, come and against me stand, and let me not remove their feet, for buying the wicked's hand.

Their fold hold are none that none waited, but work in inquiries has gone day or I never shall be able to arise.

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[29 : 21] d as