

Saved Through Their Word – John 17:20

I. Introduction:

- A. **John 17** is one of the Bible's **holiest chapters**. It rivals or surpasses any of the **Psalms**.
1. That is because we get to overhear a conversation within the Godhead – the Son speaking to the Father.
 2. This is not the prayer of a godly saved person, like David, speaking with Lord Jesus or to His Heavenly Father.
 3. This is a conversation between the eternal Son and His infinite Father, discussing a brand new relationship between them.
- B. This is one of the **highest** and **holiest** of all chapters.
1. But it is also **theologically important**, teaching us things not clearly seen elsewhere in the Word of God.
 - a. Just as we learn things about Jehovah by seeing **Isaiah** go into God's presence, we learn much more by following the Lord Jesus into the Holy of Holies.
 - b. This conversation displays important Christian doctrine – but from a heavenly perspective.
 - c. Whereas we sometimes look at it from our human viewpoint, this time it is from above.
 2. In addition to being **holy** and **theological**, it also has a **practical** side.
 3. And it is with this practical aspect that I'd like to conclude in a few minutes.
- C. These twenty-six verses could be preached as a gospel message.
1. I say that because we are reminded here that there are two kinds of people in the world.
 2. There are those souls whom the Father has given to the Son to save.
 3. Christ says in **verse 6** – *"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me **OUT of the world...**"*
 4. In other words, there are others who are still in the world & in sin; they are lost & under God's curse.
 5. Then in **verse 11** Jesus says, *"Holy Father, keep though thine own name those **whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.**"*
 6. And **verse 14** – *"I have given **THEM** thy word; and **the WORLD** hath hated **THEM...**"*
 7. There are people whom the world hates, because the people of the world hate the God and Saviour of those people.
- D. So in addition to those whom Christ & the Father have loved & saved, are those outside their bonds of grace.
1. Jesus says in **verse 9** – *"I pray not for the world (the **people** of the world), but for them which thou hast given me; for **they** are **THINE.**"*
 2. The Lord Jesus Christ **does NOT pray** for the wicked and unbelieving people of the world.
 3. And again in **verse 14** Jesus prays, I have given thy word to **our** people, *"and the (people) of the world hated them, because (our people) are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."*
 4. This is a world of **"haves"** and **"have nots,"** and it has nothing to do with economics.
 - a. There are people who possess forgiveness of sin and eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - b. And there are those who do not have any of the blessings of God's saving grace.
 - c. They have not humbly put their faith in Christ's finished work on the cross.
 5. There are two varieties of people in the world: the saved and the lost; the redeemed and the rest.
- E. Besides referring to these of **"haves"** and **"have nots,"** this scripture speaks of another group of people – a subgroup of the first. This is what first attracted me to this theme and this message.
1. There are people, chosen by God, who will **eventually** be **saved**, but they have **not YET** been born again.
 2. In **verse 20**, after praying for His disciples Christ adds, *"neither pray I for **THESE** alone, but for them also **which SHALL believe on me through their word.**"*
 3. God has His elect, who have not yet put their faith in Christ and His death on the cross.
 4. They shall one day be saved – it is guaranteed – *"that they all may be one: as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me"* – **verse 21**.
 5. And how shall those future saved people be brought to the Saviour?
 6. Through the words and the ministry of those whom the Lord has already saved – **verse 20**.

II. The words of John 17 are tied together into a nice, neat bundle with at least two beautiful golden ribbons.

- A. Some of you might remember that I preached, and later published, eighteen messages from *John 17*.
1. If you don't have a copy of that book – *"The Lord's Prayer"* – just ask, and I'll give you one.
 2. In that book I broke the chapter into chunks and looked at one, two or three verses separately over a couple of months.
 3. Tonight before looking at **verse 20**, let me tie those messages and all these verses together.
- B. There is a common, but interesting, Greek word found sixteen times in these twenty-six verses.
1. *"Didomi"* (did'o-'mee) is usually translated in some form of *"to give."*
 2. That is the only way it is **rendered** here in our Lord's prayer. **But** it is **used** in several ways.
 3. In **verse 4**, for example, the Lord Jesus refers to the commission which the Father **gave** to Him.
 - a. *"I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."*
 - b. What was that Divinely **given** work? It was to **give** eternal life to spiritually dead souls.
 - c. And paraphrasing **verse 2**, Jesus said, *"Father, you have given me power over all flesh that I should give eternal life to some of the children of Adam."*
 - d. In **verses 8** and **14**, Christ says that He had faithfully **given** – dispensed – the word which the Father had **given** Him to share.
 - e. And then in **verse 22** He testifies that He had **given** to His people the glory which the Father had **given** to Him.
 4. *"Didomi"* speaks of the responsibility which the Father had given to the Son, and of the Son's gift of salvation to humble believers.
- C. From there, that word takes us to another level of giving.
1. It leads us into a doctrine which is denied and despised by many professing Christians.
 2. The people whom Jesus saves were the Father's people in eternity past – chosen before the foundation of the world. These were **the ONLY people** given by the Father to the Son **to redeem**.
 3. **Verse 2** – Father, I have fulfilled my task to *"give eternal life to as many as thou hast given to me."*
 4. **Verse 6** – *"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word."*
 5. And **verse 24** – *"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."*
- D. Around the **length** of this chapter is the ribbon of God's gracious giving.
1. It includes the golden ribbon of God's sovereign **election** – His **choice** to give.
 2. And I shouldn't need to remind you that in this case, it isn't a doctrine being taught by one of the Apostles.
 3. These are the words of the Saviour Himself, and, in fact, He isn't in the process of teaching anyone.
 4. This is merely the causal, prayerful conversation of God the Son with God the Father.
 5. How absolutely precious is this thought.
 6. God's sovereign election is so plain, simple and obvious to the Lord that He doesn't highlight it, He just speaks of it as a matter of eternal fact.

III. The other ribbon, which goes around the breadth of John 17 is the WORD of GOD.

- A. We find it in **verses 6, 14, 17** and **20**, and it is hinted in other verses as well.
1. For example, notice that Christ speaks of *"the scriptures"* in **verse 12**.
- B. Christ Jesus says that His commission and purpose is to give eternal life to God's elect – **verse 2**.
1. *"Father, glorify thy Son... as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him."*
 2. And what is the nature of eternal life?
 3. *"This is life eternal, that they might KNOW thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent."*
 4. There are two ways in which we are brought to know God.

5. One way in which we were introduced to God is through the incarnation God in His Son.
 - a. *“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” – John 1:14.*
 6. But in a second way, the Lord Jesus has **spoken** to us of the Father – over and over again.
 - a. He has revealed God to us through His words – through His Word – through the gospel.
 - b. **Verse 6** – *“I have **manifested** thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept **thy word**.”*
 - c. It is through God’s word, both the written word and the living Word, Christ, that we have been made to know God. We know Him who was made manifest to us as we keep His Word by faith.
- C. Verse 7** – *“Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. “For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them... and they have believed that thou didst sent me.”*
1. From time to time, we need to look back at the manner in which the Lord saved our souls, in order to see how to move forward in sharing our faith with others.
 2. When I first trusted Christ as my Saviour, it was after a gospel evangelist explained a few scriptures which told me of my sinfulness, my spiritual death and my need of the Saviour.
 3. That man told me that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was that Saviour.
 4. He told me that Christ Jesus is the way the truth and the life; the only way to God and to eternal life.
 5. The Holy Spirit took His word, speaking to my heart, and with that I went to the Cross with the confidence that Christ could save even me.
- D.** It is with God’s words, I was given **spiritual** life, and in the process my **physical** life was also changed.
1. I was redirected from overt selfishness to a yearning for the eternal things of God.
 2. And this set me at odds with the world around me.
 3. **Verse 13** – Jesus prays: *“Father it is my desire **that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world even as I am not of the world.**”*
 4. The reception and application of God’s Word highlights the fact that the Christian is no longer a part of Satan’s domain.
 5. The world hates those who have been born again, because they have a new God – they love the true God.
 6. And with that new heart and new love, they pattern their lives after a new revelation – the Word of God.
- E.** And with the continued application of that word, those new believers grow more and more strange, different – alien and separated from – the world.
1. It is Jesus’ prayer that God *“**sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth**” – verse 17.*
 2. When a sinner is born again, he immediately – instantly – is changed.
 - a. He becomes a child of God – a saint, set apart and made righteous in God’s sight.
 - b. But he still lives in a temporary and corrupt body – he lives in human flesh.
 - c. He is still a sinner, and he will commit sins against the Lord again and again.
 3. But there should be – there will be – an ongoing sanctification process throughout that Christian’s earthly life.
 - a. He will want to throw aside his old sins – and with God’s help he will.
 - b. He will want to bring glory to his Saviour – and with the blessing of the Holy Spirit he will.
 - c. He will want to bring others to Christ – as Andrew yearned for the salvation of his brother Simon.
 - d. Over time, as he submits to the Lord, he will grow in these ways and in others as well.
 - e. He will progress and grow in **practical sanctification**.
 4. This on-going sanctification will be fueled and directed by the Holy Spirit **through** the **Word**.
 5. It is the Saviour’s prayer, Father *“**sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.**”*

IV. And with this I come back to what first caught my attention.

- A. Christ Jesus, in speaking with His Heavenly Father, said, *“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through THEIR word.”*
1. As time passes, and until the final of all days, a stream of sinners, like ourselves, will be saved by grace through faith. Each and every one of them will put their faith on Christ.
 2. But notice how the Lord expresses that fact in this verse – they *“shall believe on me through their word.”*
 3. After speaking about the importance and use of God’s word, here the Saviour refers to *“their word”*– **our** words.
 4. Has the Lord moved on to a different Bible, a different language, new words? Of course not.
 5. Rather, Jesus refers to words which the Christian has made his own, but which are still God’s Words rooted in the words of the Gospel.
 6. The Lord uses our witness, our testimony, and our words to bring other Andrews & Simons to Himself.
- B. If as some people say, a generation lasts 40 years before a new generation takes over...
1. If a generation is 40 years, then more than 50 generations have passed since Jesus prayed these words.
 2. The changes which have taken place in this world during those 2000 years have been enormous.
 3. But the **hearts** of today’s people are still exactly as they were in **Jesus’ day** – and even in **Noah’s day**.
 4. People are still spiritually dead, and they are still in need of eternal life, which is only found in the Saviour.
 5. The answer to humanity’s need hasn’t changed during those 50 generations.
 6. People cannot be redeemed through the ever changing words of human philosophies or secular psychology.
 7. As Paul said, *“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for IT is the power of God unto salvation.”*
 8. In speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, Peter said, *“There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.”*
- C. Brethren, the Lord Jesus is still praying for those sinners who will be saved tomorrow when they put their trust in Christ.
1. But the question I’d like to propose to this evening is this: **how shall they hear without a preacher?**
 2. Jesus said to the Father, *“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through THEIR word.”*
- D. Yes, God has a general purpose and plan for the universe, and He will be glorified in the fulfilment of that plan.
1. He also has specific plans for the individual soul in that universe whom He intends to save.
 2. And a part of that plan includes the way in which that individual soul will hear that he needs to be saved.
 3. Not only is our Saviour praying for those who shall believe on Him, but in a sense He is praying for you and me to share with those people their need to repent and to believe on Christ.
- E. Again, think about that: the Saviour, the Second Person of the God-head, is praying for those He intends to save tomorrow, next week, and a year from now.
1. Each and every one of them will repent & they will cast themselves down before the cross pleading for mercy.
 2. But in the plan and decree of God, you and I are a part of the Lord’s prayer and the divine providence.
 3. We have a job to do within God’s eternal decree.
 4. We have responsibilities under the very prayers of the Lord Jesus.
 5. What an awesome thought; what an awe-inspiring consideration: we are a part of God’s eternal plan of redemption for those who shall believe on Him.
- F. What are you doing to fulfill God’s will? What are you doing to share God’s Word?
1. When all God’s saints stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, what will be said of us?
 2. To whom have we spoken about the Saviour and with whom have we shared the gospel?
 3. Will we have someone standing beside us, as Simon will stand with Andrew, because they have believed on Christ through our word?