



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

John 17: 11-19

Spring 2023

"Band Of Brothers"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and good morning. We are in John 17, and we're looking at verses 11 through 19 where Jesus finishes up this second aspect of the high priestly prayer with His prayer for the disciples. A prayer for the eleven, but it's a prayer that applies to all of us. So let me begin reading with verse 11 through verse 19,

<sup>11</sup> I am no longer in the world; and *yet* they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, *the name* which You have given Me, that they may be one even as *We are*. <sup>12</sup> 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 but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled.

<sup>13</sup> But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. <sup>14</sup> I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. <sup>15</sup> I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil *one*. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

John 17: 1-19

May the LORD bless this reading of His Word, and bless our time of study in it together. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, what a privilege it is again to be with Your people. I always rejoice as I sit up here, and stand up here, and look out over the crowd and think, what a blessing it is to be with these people, Your people, gathered by Your grace into this fellowship, into the church, into the body of Christ, where we can meet, weekly, as we're instructed to do. And as we're to meet on the LORD's day for this purpose, to fellowship—and fellowship in the sense that we gather as Your people to nourish one another, to be nourished on the Word of God, and to influence one another through our time together as we exhort one another and encourage one another—and then find great spiritual nourishment from the Word of God.

This is where we're to be; this is what we're to feed upon—and the Lord makes a great deal out of that in this passage that we will look at. We are desperately in need of Your Word daily and of our connection with You every moment of our existence. And that relationship is enhanced, is strengthened, is given growth through the study of Your Word.

And so LORD, as we study what we've read, we pray that You would bless it to our souls—nourish our souls, build us up in the faith, equip us for what lies ahead outside in the world around us. So much of what this text is about is involving ourselves as Your representatives in the world around us. May they see in us the light of God; may they see in us Christ the Savior; may we have an influence.

We look to You to bless us spiritually, LORD, and we pray You'd bless us materially, as well. We pray spiritually for the vacation Bible School this week, and thank You that so many children are signed up, and we have so many workers and pray You'd bless all of them. Bless the workers; give them joy in their labor. And bless the children; open hearts to receive the Gospel. Nourish those children who have already put their faith in Christ and may many be introduced to Him through this week of study and programs. And LORD, we just pray You'd bless it.

Bless us now, LORD, as we turn our attention to this great text of Scripture, in this great chapter of the Bible, and teach us and build us up in the faith, to Your glory and our edification. And we pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

*(Message)* I am not an avid reader of Shakespeare, but I've struggled through a few plays...struggled through. One is *Henry V*, which reaches a high point in Act 4 when Henry gives a rousing speech to his army. I think most of you are familiar with it. It is before the battle of Agincourt; the French outnumbered the English; and so he spoke to inspire dedication and unity for the fight which would test their valor and skill. He allowed cowards to leave, (and he'd pay their way home). But others he invited to join him in what would be a glorious fight and called them 'brothers'; "We few, we happy few, we band of brothers."

That could describe the Lord's disciples. They were few, not especially happy, but they were 'a band of brothers' who would soon enter a spiritual war that required unity and dedication. But the Lord didn't resort to rousing rhetoric to boost their courage and devotion. In fact He didn't speak to them—He spoke to His heavenly Father.

They were still in the upper room, only a few hours before Jesus' arrest in the garden. In the prayer He recalled, 'the Father gave them to Him and they were faithful; they had kept the Father's Word.' (Jn 17:6). But their faithfulness and steel for the struggle, (which they would soon enter and would engage in for the rest of their lives), that resolve, did not come from them—it was God's gift of grace. So Jesus had to pray for them; to ask God to give them spiritual strength, to ask for sanctification, and to ask for dedication for all that was needed for them to carry on and fight the good fight of faith.

He prayed first for their protection from the enemy—and then from disunity. That's the request He made in verse 11, "...keep them in Your name...that they may be one even as We *are*." Jesus always prayed for His disciples. He rose early to pray for

them; He stayed up late into the night to pray for them because they needed, as we need, God's preserving grace at every moment.

But there may have been some added urgency to His prayer here because He was leaving them. He said, "I am no longer in the world", (vs11a). His departure was a certain fact. He was going to the Father by way of the cross, the resurrection, and the ascension—and He wouldn't be with them physically to protect them from their spiritual enemy whose scheme is always to divide and conquer. So He committed them to the Father's keeping. He prayed, "...keep them in Your name", (vs11b), meaning, 'Keep them in the truth that had been revealed to them'.

The name of God, as you know, is the revelation of His nature and character; and He was praying here that the Father would keep these disciples faithful to the truth and united in it. He wanted them to be *one*, as He and the Father are *one*—one in love and one in purpose. But that oneness, that unity, can only exist in *truth*.

That same idea is expressed in verses 17 and 18, where He prayed that they would be, 'sanctified in the truth'. Persistence in the truth; loyalty to the revelation of Christ is the way to unity. And that requires effort on our part. It requires study to understand the name of God, to understand the revelation that He has given us of Himself. That is essential for our safety and preservation.

Now that's clear from a variety of texts all through the Bible: Proverbs 18, verse 10, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower; The righteous runs into it and is safe." There is no safety outside of the truth of God. Outside of the truth of God, when we depart from it at all, we're adrift. The Word of God is this fundamental. I've said this before, and I say it again, 'The Word of God is the revelation of reality.' If we don't have it, we are adrift; everything is relative and there is no truth, at least for us to discern. No, we need the Word of God. We need the revelation of God. We need the truth of God. We're to run into it, hide into it. It's our shelter.

But still, 'We are *kept*'. Our understanding of the truth, and desire for it, and loyalty to it, is all of God. Ultimately, it is His power that *keeps* us persevering, that *keeps* us in the Word of God—that gives us a love for it and *keeps* us persevering. That's the reason Christ prays to Him, to His Father, for it—for this love of the truth, for this perseverance in it. Jesus had successfully *kept* them during His ministry. He said in verse 12, "While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name..."

The only exception to that was Judas, who the Lord calls, "the son of perdition", (The son of hell). (vs12c). Only he perished. Yet the loss of Judas wasn't a failure by the Lord, it was according to God's purpose. It happened, Jesus said, "...so that the Scripture would be fulfilled." (vs12d). Which is a reference to Psalm 41, verse 9, where David wrote of being betrayed by a close associate—probably his counselor, Ahithophel.

The event, which occurred during Absalom's rebellion, foreshadowed, '*pictured*', the Lord's betrayal by Judas—and in that way it prophesied it. The Lord knew the prophesy and He knew the true heart of Judas—He knew it all along. Back in John, chapter 6, in verse 70, He said of the disciples, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil." Judas had a part, a sad part, in the Lord's plan of salvation. By his betrayal he set in motion events that led to the crucifixion—and our salvation. He participated willingly, according to his evil heart.

But of His elect, the eleven chosen for salvation and given to Him by the Father, not one was lost. And not one believer in Jesus Christ will ever be lost. The Lord gave that assurance back in chapter 10; He gives His sheep "eternal life", He said. It is His gift. It is eternal. It is not temporary. It cannot be taken away. And He validates that when He says, "...and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.", John 10, verse 28. And, 'no one will snatch them out of the Father's hand.' (vs29). We are in Christ's hand, and Christ's hand is in the Father's hand—we are doubly secure. That's eternal security.

It's also what we call 'the perseverance of the saints', or as some prefer, 'the perseverance of the Savior with the saints.' "I was keeping them," He said. "I guarded them and not one of them perished." (vs12b). It's good to know that we are in His hand—that He is our guide and our guard. If we were left to ourselves, we would all certainly perish. If our security depended on our faithfulness, our effort, we wouldn't last a day.

Now if that seems unfair to us, well, consider Adam who was created perfect. He was put in a perfect environment, a spacious garden—yet the moment he was tempted...he fell. How could we imperfect people stand on our own for a moment?

Well, that will never happen, 'standing on our own', the LORD is always with us. The LORD loves us with an eternal, unconditional love. He chose us from eternity past when He knew we would be rebels against Him. He bought us with His Son's own blood when we were enemies and hostile to Him. Now that we're His children, now that we're His sons and daughters, He'll never let us go. He's bound Himself to us in a New Covenant relationship. The psalmist wrote in Psalm 121, that, "He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber." (vs3). He never sleeps on the job; His eye is always upon us. "The LORD", he said, "is your keeper." (vs5). He cannot fail.

And those who seem to be exceptions to this only *seem* to be exceptions. In the last day it will be known that 'the exceptions' were really people like Judas who were never really born again. The Lord had faithfully, successfully, kept His disciples in the truth and united to one another.

But again, we are weak in ourselves. There are dark forces within and without that could easily destroy our unity. You can think of a variety: Jealousy, selfishness, bitterness—all kinds of sin. We are in a continual war with these forces. Whether it's the world, or it's the flesh, or it's the devil, the battle is on and it never lets up—it's on right now. So if the Lord thought it necessary to pray earnestly for us, for our protection and unity, then how much more should we be praying for ourselves, and for one another?

But that's not all that He prayed for. Next, in verse 13, the Lord prayed for their happiness, their joy—that they, 'would have His joy.' They had very little joy at that moment. They had very little joy that evening; they weren't 'the happy few', yet.

After the resurrection, though, they would understand the cross, they would understand His victory and what it meant for them, and of course would spend the rest of their lives understanding it and growing in it, understanding the forgiveness that they had in Christ, and the life that they have in Him. —And then they would rejoice.

But it's significant, to my mind at least, that His great concern here, [before He was arrested, before He was put on trial, beaten, and then put on a cross—with all that before Him and what He would face in the garden when He struggled with the reality that He would be separated from the Father, (Something we can't understand: We can understand nails in a hand, and the pain, and the suffering, and the humiliation; but the great trial for Him was the separation from His Father.), with all of that before Him, looming before Him like a dark cloud], His great concern was for them—and for their joy. He wanted them to have it fully. And He wants that for all of His disciples—and He wants that for you.

Well, Don Carson pointed out, that that goes back to chapter 15, verses 10 and 11, where Jesus explained that 'His joy' would "be made full" in them by their 'abiding in the Father's love.' But that *abiding*, (as Dr. Carson pointed out), turns on obedience to Him. *Love* and *obedience* are distinct but inseparable. We are not loving the Lord when disobeying Him. [Now, '*Disobedience* promises happiness', and that's why we choose it... 'This is a much better way to go.'] —But it is always the wrong way to go; and it always leads to sorrow and regret. So love is disciplined; love is obedient.

But the motivation for *abiding* in the Father's love is not, 'the knowing that it's the best path to joy'; (it is—and that is motivating); but the better motivation is *knowing Him*, *knowing* His love for us and the sacrifice that He made for us—His own Son, for us.

Now that's what galvanizes a desire to live for Him—who “so loved the world” of sinners, so loved you personally, that He chose you from all eternity, and “gave His only begotten Son” for you. (Jn 3:16). Well, knowing that, understanding that, growing in the understanding of that, keeps us in His love from the human perspective. That's what we do.

So again, it comes back to *knowing*. And ultimately it is the Lord though, who keeps us in that; keeps us in Him, keeps us in the truth and pursuing the truth, keeps us believing. Knowing that fact that He never lets go, (even when we stray like sheep, which we do), that generates love, that generates joy—and it should. The Lord wants us truly happy; He wants us joyful. And that, too, is something He obtained for us at the cross.

But again, it's not a promise of joy without conflict. The world we live in is a hostile place. The war was won at the cross and the empty tomb, but there are still battles to fight. So, the Lord now prays that the Father would protect the disciples in the world from the prince of this world, “the evil *one*”. (vs15).

In verse 14 He says that, ‘He has given them God's Word’, which requires faith in it—believing the Word that is given. And it involves commitment to it. But that put them in opposition to the world since God's Word condemns the world, pronounces it guilty and headed for judgment. The world doesn't like that. So Jesus said, “...the world has hated them.” (vs14b).

In chapter 15, verse 20, we read that, “A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.” And they would: They would hate and persecute the disciples because they had changed sides; they were no longer aligned with the world. They joined Jesus, who is not of the world; and as a result, ‘they were no longer of the world.’ (vs14c).

Now, thinking about that: Thinking about all the trials that were before them, and living in this hostile place, (this hostile world), would it not have been merciful to



just take them out of this world when He left it—and for the disciples to ascend into heaven with Him and be spared all the trials of persecution, struggle, and pain?

Well we might think that would have been the merciful thing to do, but that is not the Lord's plan—just the opposite. He wanted them in the heat of battle, fighting His fight here, fighting a fight that would be to your blessing. And that's what He prayed for in verse 15. "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one."

Again, they needed *keeping*: To be *kept* in His name, to be *kept* in the truth, to be *kept* in the faith, in believing—and now, here, *kept from* Satan and his wiles. But what great trials they would suffer: The fury of the devil, (who as Peter would later write, "...prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.") (1Pe 5:8), they weren't, (and we are not either), sufficient to withstand him.

But the Lord is. He proved that early in His ministry, at the very beginning—and we see it recorded in Matthew and Luke when He's in the desert, He's in the wilderness, and He's tempted by the devil—and each time He overcomes the devil. How does He overcome it? With the Word of God.

And the Lord would *keep* them; He would keep these eleven, and keep all of us from the evil one. Now, that would mean keeping them from Satan's victory over them and us, by keeping them through the battles we have with him, and with the world—from strong temptation and cruel persecution. That would be the life of the apostles—and that would be the very life of the church down through its history. That didn't mean that there were no defeats; but it does mean no ultimate victory for the devil.

We do fail in the fight; we stumble; we are weak in and of ourselves. We need to realize that about ourselves. And so, as Paul will later write in his epistle to the Ephesians in chapter 6, 'We're in a battle. We're in a war.' And he tells us to be equipped for that. We have the equipment and we're to 'put it on'. We're to wear 'the armor of God.' We're to be ready to fight the good fight of faith every day; because, as I said at the beginning, we are in the heat of battle every day without let up.

Often the attacks of the evil one are not direct—they are through the world. He is, as Jesus called him earlier in chapter 14, (vs30), “the ruler of this world.” Not the ultimate ruler, of course. He’s called ‘the prince of this age’; he’s a ruler; he’s a powerful one—but of course, under the authority and power of the Lord God, the Creator of everything. But he is ‘the ruler of this world.’ And so he uses the appeal of the world to draw us away from the LORD and His ways with the attractions of the world, the comforts and the pleasures of the world, the honors and the praise of the world; it’s so desirable to have all of that. It is—for all of us.

Or he uses the hatred of the world to crush the believer; and render him or her disillusioned with the faith: ‘How could God allow this to happen? What kind of God am I serving?’ I think that may have been what affected Demas, who deserted Paul after serving with him for so long. He finally gave up; he went back to the comforts of home in Thessalonica. I don't think he was unsaved—I think he just failed miserably toward the end of his life as a Christian. That can happen—and it's a warning to us.

Satan is clever. Satan is an evil genius. Satan has lots of weapons in his arsenal, all kinds of “fiery darts”, (Eph 6:16), he can use to wear us down and draw us away; to confuse, to discourage, or distract us, and render us useless in the Lord’s service. He can't snatch us out of God's hand, but he can render us useless for a time.

So it's instructive to notice *the spiritual dimension* of the Lord’s prayer for His disciples. That's what it has here, a spiritual dimension. We spend time praying for our health and finances, for our physical wellbeing—for real needs that are worthy of prayer and that need prayer. That's part of the Lord’s model prayer in Matthew chapter 6, verse 11, praying for “our daily bread”, praying for our material needs. We do that.

But the Lord’s concern here was for the souls of His disciples. He saw very clearly what lay ahead of them, (and what they really couldn't see), and He prayed for their protection from the evil one. We need to have that same awareness and concern for the “spiritual” conflict, (as Paul described it in Ephesians 6), because a preoccupation with the material worries leads to a loss in the spiritual war.

The Lord taught that in Matthew 6, about 'living like the Gentiles' and worrying about food and clothing. 'Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things', He said. "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So don't worry about tomorrow..." Matthew 6, verses 30 through 34.

Here He prayed for them: For their safety, for their protection from disunity, from the temptations of the world and the devil—and to be *kept* faithful to God's Word, *kept* in His name, *kept* in His truth.

And He prayed next for the disciples' resolve in all of this: For their dedication to the mission that He had entrusted to them—and has entrusted to us, as well. Again He said, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (vs16). They've been called out of this world, called to Christ, regenerated, given new life, so that they were completely different from those who are of the world.

Based on that, He prayed that they would be made useful in the world. Verse 17, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." *Sanctification* basically is, 'being set apart'. It's being separated; it's being dedicated to God and to some holy purpose and use. And that's what the Lord prayed for His disciples here, that they would be consecrated to God's service.

Now normally, when we think of sanctification, we think of God's work of grace in which we are renewed after the image of God, after the image of Christ, become more Christ-like, so that we are enabled to die to sin and to live to righteousness. And I think that idea is included here.

But here it cannot mean purification from sin, at least not mainly, not principally, because notice in verse 19, what the Lord said, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself." And the Lord couldn't mean that He purified Himself of sin; He's perfect; He's sinless. So what He meant is that, 'For their sakes', He dedicated Himself to God's service. He consecrated Himself to the mission of the cross for their salvation and for their future service.

And He's praying here the same for them. He's praying that the disciples and all of us; His people, His elect down through the ages, that we be 'consecrated to the service of God'. And in doing that, (consecrating ourselves to the service of God), to the service of this world. No one can be of greater service to the world than the servant of God. There's no greater service that they can receive than to have the light of God's truth shine on them.

We find illustrations of this idea of *sanctification as consecration* all through the Old Testament where under the Law, people and things were *sanctified* in the sense of dedicated. For example, at the end of the Book of Exodus in chapter 40, Moses was instructed to set up the tabernacle and *sanctify* it: Its furnishings, its altar, its utensils that would be used in worship. 'Set them apart for special use.'

Aaron's priestly garments were anointed and described as 'sanctified'. Not made moral, obviously; an inanimate object isn't moral, but it meant *dedicated, consecrated* to God's service and not to just common use—special service.

Now that's what the Lord prayed for His disciples: That they would be *dedicated* to God's service, *set apart* from the world, and *set apart* to the Lord. The Lord didn't want them taken out of the world, this hostile place, He wants them in the world: Involved with the world but not of the world—separated from its spirit and its goals; and resolved to serve Christ.

I have a copy of an etching on the wall of my library by the Renaissance and Reformation artist, Albrecht Dürer. In fact, I bought it in his house in Germany. I was excited to find it because I've always been sort of fascinated with this etching. And I'm sure I've referred to it before, (in fact I know I've referred to it before). It's titled *Knight, Death and the Devil*, and it's of a medieval knight in armor on his horse. He's on a mission.

But he is surrounded by temptations. There are toads and salamanders on the path, symbols of base instincts that could bring him down. There's the ghoulish specter of death in front, holding up an hour glass to terrify him. Behind him is the devil with a

monstrous head, carrying a large, wicked looking spear to afflict him. Then, in the background, is a castle on a hill, his home which holds his earthly goods and everything that's dear to him; his wife and children—but that could entice him to seek peace and rest at the wrong time.

Still, the knight is steadfast in his mission. He ignores the dangers, ignores the distractions. He's looking only ahead—looking to Christ, and continues to ride forward to battle.

That's us. That's the Christian warrior. And we can continue going forward because we are *kept* by the Father in His name, in His truth, and from the power of the devil.

And Christ is praying for us. We couldn't do it otherwise. The fact is, He is praying here, and always lives to make intercession for us. And that's the proof that this life, (as I say maybe too much, but I say repeatedly), 'This life is supernatural.' Christ asks the Father to do it, to *sanctify us*; otherwise we'll drift, and we'll drift off into error and scandal.

Sanctification, the work of making us fit for life, mature in the faith, increasingly pure and dedicated, is God's work, the work of the Holy Spirit. It is completed in glorification. God alone does it. But the means that He uses to accomplish it is His Word. "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." (vs17). He uses all of life's experience in this process of sanctification: Our joys to give us gratitude, our failures to give us sobriety and seriousness about life.

But there is no sanctification apart from God's Word—which is *truth*. It's as we absorb the Scriptures, God's revelation, and value it, that we are set apart to God and His service. As we see Christ and His glory, we become less and less enamored of the world and more and more enamored of Him—wanting to follow Him and please Him and be like Him. That's how it works: The Scripture influences the heart, which contains our desires and affects our conduct—because the way we think is the way we are.

Augustin said, (and I just read this quote the other day), "You want to know the character of a man? Look at his loves." What does he love? That tells you his character. If you love Christ, it's going to affect your conduct, your character.

I know you're busy. This is a busy age in which we live. We have all these gadgets that are supposed to make things easier and conserve our time—and they just give us more opportunity to get busy. And we are busy people—but it's easy to become a slave to that; it's easy to become a slave to our schedules.

But this is a necessity. Just as eating breakfast, lunch, and dinner is a necessity for our physical lives, our spiritual diet on the Word of God is what He blesses—and what He will bless. We need to take time for that; and, as I say, God will bless that.

That's part of the life of faith. It's knowing that I need to put Him first, to spend my time thinking on His revelation. And if it's going to infringe on some other activity, so be it—God will bless that and He will provide. That's the life of faith.

But also there's an urgency about this. We're on a mission. The Lord said that in verse 18. "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world." "Them", of course, is the apostles—but His words apply to us as well. He makes that clear in just a few verses, in verses 20 through 23. We have been set apart from the world, and sent back into the world to call people out and reflect God's grace. We are to be 'salt and light' in this world.

And to that end, Jesus sanctified Himself, resolved to do it and die for us, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth." (vs19). God would have each of us do that: Study the Word of God and apply it; put on the whole armor of God and fight the good fight of faith every day. We face powerful enemies; and a subtle, clever enemy who prowls about like a "roaring lion."

But Christ has already overcome them, overcome them all. Crushed the serpent's head at the cross and is now praying for us to triumph. We will—His prayers can't fail; we will triumph. As Luther put it, "Though this world is filled with devils that threaten us,

God hath willed His truth to triumph through us." At the end of it all, at the end of it all...how glorious it will be to have fought for Christ.

In Henry's speech before the battle, he promised his soldiers that in the days to come, when they stripped off their sleeve to show the scars of battle, men would regret not having fought with them. "Gentlemen in England, now in bed," he said, "shall think themselves accursed they were not here."

At the end of this life, when the battles are over, we will not regret one wound that we receive from the world in the LORD'S service. The scars we will carry into eternity will be trophies of honor. So may the LORD give us understanding now, gives us courage and resolve, now, to serve Him daily, faithfully, sacrificially. And may He protect us and preserve our unity in the truth. We are 'a band of brothers and sisters', united, who need the support of each other—bearing one another's burdens to strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble.

And while we do that, we also invite you, who may not know Christ, to join us, to come to Him. It's not an invitation to an easy life—but it is an invitation to the very best life. To real life, life lived for the good of others and to God's glory with eternal reward and benefit.

Well, the way one comes is by believing in Him; recognizing that you are separated from Christ, you're lost and guilty, and you're headed for a storm of judgment—and then trusting in Him as God's Son and man's Savior who bore that storm in our place. And all who do that, all who trust in Him are received by Him. They are forgiven and made sons of God with eternal life and a glorious future—and made a soldier of Christ with a glorious mission. May God help you to look to Him and come to Him. And help us to resolve ourselves in that great mission.

*(Closing prayer)* Father, how true that hymn is. We are all, admittedly, 'prone to wander.' But praise You, Father, we're *kept*—*kept* by You, *kept* by Your Son who prays for us constantly, by the Spirit who prays for us constantly within our hearts.

Father, we pray that You would consecrate us to the mission that You've given us, that we would serve You faithfully, faithfully to the end. Which will come soon, this life is brief, passing away, and the day is coming when we'll enter into glory. May we enter well and be able to, as it were, 'strip the sleeve from our arm', and show the scars that we received from our faithful fight for You.

We thank You, Father, for all that we have in Christ. We thank You for what You have obtained for us through His death and the glorious future that's ours—and the safe present that is ours even though it's a hostile world. We thank You for Your grace.

And now the LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance on you and give you peace. In Christ's name. Amen.

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