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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Delves at "Ebenezer" Clapham on Wednesday evening 17.4.74

Hymns 850, 1155, 751

Reading: John 17

Text John 17.24

"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".

This very sacred chapter is a prayer, it has been said to be the most profound prayer that has ever been offered on the face of the earth; and truly it is a wonderful prayer. There are three parties in it in a saving way so to speak. First of all there are the frequent references to the Father made in this chapter by the Lord Jesus. His prayer was to His Father, and indeed so were all His prayers, as when He was in the Garden, and on many other occasions besides. He was the Son of God in the most blessed sense. That cannot apply to any of His people in the same aspect. He was the Eternal Son of God in His divine personality, the Son of God only begotten, the Son of God when He was down here below. Many prayers were put up by Him to His Father in the days of His flesh.

I was not actually anticipating speaking from this when I came into the Pulpit, but the hymns and the loss of our friend, Mr. A. Hatton, have led my mind to it. What a wonderful thing it is for one to be able to look up to the heaven and say my Father is there; my Father in heaven. I remember when I did that once in a particular way and felt it too, that my Father is in heaven, and this, although it may be lightly used by many religious people, involves a very sacred, beautiful, blessed relationship, for His children are sons and daughters of Zion, washed in the Redeemer's blood.

"Father I will". Here is a will then. The will is the will of Christ concerning His dear people. When He was in the garden He submitted to His Father's will when He said, "If this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done". This was a will that He came to do, which involved His sufferings and death, and He accomplished it substitutionally when He said, "It is finished and bowed his head and gave up the ghost". "Father, I will" - as

though He would say this is My one purpose, My aim, My desire, My object, My will. "I will, that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am". He had referred to the union subsisting between the three parties, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me". It is noticeable that He said, "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me". "I pray not for the world" - a solemn thought this, to have no part or interest in this chapter, this prayer, to have no part in the prayers of Christ is to have no part in Christ, it is to be in the world and to live and die in it. "I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me". "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me...". This is the most blessed gift that ever was. No creature has ever made a gift to compare with this, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me". They were given to Him in the eternal decrees of God the Father, all were predestinated unto everlasting life in the mind of God from all eternity, every one of them; and there they were secure in a covenant ordered in all things and sure. "Those whom Thou hast given Me". It is a striking thought, the prayer is concentrated here on those that were given Him. It is also remarkable to feel that He received them knowing what was involved in the gift. He received every one of them, "them which thou hast given me". These people, that is the whole elect of God, were given to Christ to redeem them. We are all lost in Adam friends, and so considered are in a perishing condition, every one of us, you and I. If we are of those that were given to Him, and it is a transporting thought that there should ever be such a gift; but if this is so in the divine purposes of God, then we stand on a foundation upon which the whole church is built.

"Those whom Thou hast given Me". We must go back then to the eternal choice of them in Christ. They were all chosen in Him from the foundation of the world. They were chosen every one of them. What a profound thought! This is like a golden chain. "Those whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified".

They were given to Him. I do not know whether this has ever come home to some of you, it may have done, probably it has, but it is a transporting thought, our mind goes back into the everlasting love of God concerning those of whom He made choice. They were all chosen in Christ, but it did not end merely in the choice. Here they are all lost and ruined in the Adam fall from the beginning - every one - yet they were given to Christ - every one. What did this necessitate? Three particular things. First the Saviour's incarnation, in coming to this world and assuming our nature, being made a little lower than the angels. It involved this and there is something very beautiful about it.

"But lo! he leaves those heavenly forms,
The Word descends and dwells in clay,
That he may hold converse with worms,
Dressed in such feeble flesh as they".

This makes Him a near kinsman, bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. It also necessitated His substitution. He stood in our place, became responsible for our debts and He paid them, He paid every one of them, not so much in the pound, but every one of them, for every one of His people were insolvent, bankrupt debtors who had nothing to pay. These are the Lord's dear people then, they are as bankrupt beggars, have nothing to pay, and that is the place we must all come down to, as with the two debtors in the parable, "when they had nothing to pay He frankly forgave them both". It is very hard to flesh and blood, but it is sweet to faith to come there, to lie at His feet with nothing of our own to claim His divine compassion and mercy.

"They also whom thou hast given me". The will of the Lord Jesus in the prayer is "That they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am". Is not this striking, as I may have mentioned before, "Where I am"; as though He was then in glory; so He was as to His divine nature, but His human nature was there with His disciples "I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am". We cannot contemplate the glory awaiting the redeemed of the Lord. Those whom we have known and loved who have departed this life, are now "absent from the body, present with the Lord", to be there for ever with Him, "They also whom thou hast given me". This truth

is absolute. Everyone who was given to Christ shall one day be with Him where He is. This is the will of Christ, and it is a will that cannot be broken. It is an absolute will, though involved in the prayer here. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am." "Be with Me". Sometimes now during the night seasons, as I meditate upon these things, I wonder what it can be like to be there, even as we have been singing in that first beautiful hymn (850). There they are, the blood-washed throng, before the throne of God. They behold His glory, they are beholding it now; and "once they were mourning here below,
And wet their couch with tears;
They wrestled hard, as we do now,
With sins, and doubts, and fears."

Now they are gone from earth to heaven, as it is with our late beloved friend Mr. Hatton. All that were given to Christ leave behind all the infirmities of flesh and blood, pain, sorrow and sin for ever and ever. "They also whom thou hast given me: be with me where I am". That will be heaven, friends, to be where He is, and that must be what the Psalmist felt when he said, "Whom have I in heaven beside thee". But if we are destined to be there with Him we must know something of Him while we are down here in a saving and gracious way. Those whom the Father gave to Christ will every one be in heaven one day, but they will have to be prepared for it, for heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. "I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory". There is a glory, if I may say this without speculating, there is a glory which we cannot see with our mortal eyes and that is the glory of His eternal deity, His Godhead. That is beyond our compass, but there is a glory in His eternal deity which may be seen by faith but this is not by faith it is an open view of Him "that they may behold my glory". What glory is this then? I would understand it to refer to His mediatorial glory, for "Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins". Him hath God exalted as a mediator between God and sinful men.

When we are a little lively, friends, everything pertaining to this glorious Person, the Lord Jesus Christ, is beautifully attractive. When the Holy Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us in that sweet revelation there is a wonderful attraction. Everything concerning Him is beautiful in the eye of faith, He is the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." This is what heaven really means, beholding the glory of Christ, not looking about to see who might be there, but beholding the glory of Christ, His mediatorial glory where He is. While we are down here we see through a glass darkly, very darkly, and John says, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is". "That they may behold my glory" and that will be heaven. The redeemed of the Lord shall behold the glory of Christ. One day soul and body shall be united at the glorious resurrection when the Lord shall come the second time without sin unto salvation. Oh to get a sight of Him without being imaginative. The sight is not the sight of sense, it is a sight of faith.

So while we are down here the Lord's dear people may have a prospect, and this is the prospect that they look forward to sometimes, which softens the heart, "to behold the glory of Christ". What a wonderful thing it must be to be prepared for heaven, washed in the Redeemer's blood, clothed in His spotless righteousness, pardoned and justified and ultimately glorified for ever and ever, in an everlasting habitation, a heavenly home - "that they may behold my glory". Oh dear friends how we need to search our hearts as to our own case. What prospect have you, what prospect have I, of one day beholding this glory of Christ? If we have some manifestation of Him here by the Holy Spirit, Who takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to us, I believe we shall ultimately behold that glory there. Many of the Lord's dear people have an earnest of heaven in their souls when they are here in a love to Christ and a sacred sense of union to Him. "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me". So the glory referred to was given Him by His Father, and this I take it, as I have mentioned, refers to His mediatorial glory.

Miss Noller

The Apostle Paul writing to Timothy says that "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all", all "whom Thou hast given Me". A sacred thought. I have been reading of Samuel Burton who was walking along the road very despondent when suddenly the words came:-

"These were sinners once, like thee,
But have full salvation found."

He said, 'Not like me Lord', then it came "These were sinners once like thee", 'Not like me Lord', "**Once like thee, once like thee**" was repeated. Oh what a mercy to have a real religion that will terminate in everlasting glory.

"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". This links with the last verse which is very beautiful, "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them". So that if you feel a sweet touch of the love of Christ in your poor heart it is the same love wherewith the Father loves His beloved Son, it is the same love "Wherewith thou hast loved me". It flows from the fountain head through the stream of the Saviour's substitutional work and the merit of His sufferings and death into the hearts of His dear people. A hymn writer says,

"If once the love of Christ we feel
Upon our hearts impressed,
The mark of that celestial seal
Can never be erased."

If you should get some sweet sense of the love of Christ shed abroad in your heart you are as near to heaven as you can be down here.

This is a wonderful prayer. Words are poor, they cannot describe it, but the chief and great point is to be inside it. There is a people that He prays for and a people that He does not pray for. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me". So if we are not in this prayer we have no hope of heaven, religious though we may be; we must be inside this prayer. Perhaps you may have sometimes read this and asked the Lord to make it clear that you are inside it; "Whom thou hast given me". This prospect lies before those "whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory".

"The joys prepared for suffering saints
Will make amends for all".