

Connecting Minds

"These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31)

The Gospel of John

Chapter 17:6

"I have manifested Your Name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word."

Having prayed for Himself in the first five verses Jesus now prays for His disciples and for us in the remaining 21 verses of this chapter. But as a general analysis, look at Jesus' prayer briefly as a whole. When does the first petition appear? It isn't until verse 11 - "Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me..." Jesus prays 5 verses before He makes any petition for His disciples

Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes "He pleads for them; He does not merely make requests, He produces arguments and makes statements."¹ This is often the way the Scriptures deal with prayer, putting certain statements, doctrines and reasons first and only then following with petitions. As one example, Paul does this in Colossians 1:3-9. The first 6 verses express the Colossians faith in Christ and then in verse 9 Paul says "For this reason we do not cease to pray for you and to ask..."

Few verses in Scripture speak so plainly to the doctrine of election than verse 6 of this chapter. Before we look very deeply at this verse we can pull out the basic teaching by asking some simple questions. First, who do the elect belong to? The Father and the Son. Jesus says of the elect, "*They were Yours, You gave them to Me...*" They were the Father's but they have been given to the Son. Second, what does Jesus say He has done for these people? "I have manifested Your name to the men You have given Me..." Third, where did the Father give the elect from? He gave them from the world - "Whom You have given Me out of the world..." Lastly, what does this "given" people do? "You gave them to Me, *and they have kept Your word...*"

¹ The Assurance of Our Salvation, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, pg. 195

“They were Yours, You gave them to Me...” It is at God’s initiative that we are saved. But this verse opens up to us some of the mysteries of our salvation. We belonged to God the Father before we were ever born. We were given to God the Son before the earth ever knew of our existence. We are a gift from God the Father to God the Son before time, this earth or we ever existed.

We are told that the elect are given “out of the world...” That is, they were taken from the world of men and women but not the entire world was taken. We know this because we are also told that “they have kept Your word...” and so this distinguishes those given from those not given.

Here’s the amazing truth Jesus teaches us in this prayer. The work of Jesus, His work on the cross, does not *make* us God’s people. No. Jesus says that the elect were God’s people even before He came. So what did Jesus come to do? Paul tells us in Titus 2:14 that Jesus came to “purify for Himself His own special people...” He did not come to gain a people for Himself but to purify those who were already given to Him. The elect of God were already loved by God. It was us, who in our fallen nature needed to be reconciled to the God we hated. Nowhere does the Bible say that God is an enemy to the elect - the elect are God’s: “Yours they were...”

This is where our understanding of our salvation must begin - with God, not with us. Most of the trouble with people who doubt their salvation or with those who feel utterly discouraged about evangelism is that they forget that salvation starts with God, not with our efforts.

TableTalk

Read these verses of some other prayers in the Bible:

2 Kings 19:14-19 - the first 4 verses deal with God’s power and Hezekiah’s problem before in verse 19 Hezekiah makes a request.

Acts 4:23-29 - the first 5 verses deal with praise and recounting to God His own works before they make a request.