

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 17:11

"Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are one."

In verse 11 Jesus begins to speak of His great desire that the people who have been given to Him be kept safe. He says this repeatedly in the coming verses - "Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me... I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept..." Later in verse 15 Jesus says again "Keep them from the evil one..."

"While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name..." Jesus did protect His disciples when He was on this earth. Matthew 5:1,2 - Jesus taught His disciples - "When He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them..." A knowledge of the truth is our protection against lies and deceptions. Matthew 10:16-20 - Jesus warned His disciples of danger, even danger in ministry - "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves..." We shouldn't be surprised by suffering since we have been forewarned. John 18:8,9 - Jesus physically protected His people - "I have told you that I am He. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way..." But now things were about to change. Jesus is leaving the world - "Now I am no longer in the world..." Jesus is going to the cross and then ascending back to the right hand of the Father.

"But these are in the world..." Can you see why Jesus prays so passionately for His people? Jesus is leaving the world but His disciples remain in the world. Jesus has protected them in His time in the world but now He is leaving. The full onslaught of the world must soon be directed towards His small band of disciples because the disciples are not of the world (verse 16). The very fact that Jesus says "keep them" presupposes a certain level of danger.

Marcus Rainsford writes very well of this: "I come to Thy presence where there is fullness of joy, and to 'Thy right hand where there are pleasures forevermore.' 'I come' - to where the river of the water of life flows from the throne of God; but *these*, '*these* are in the wilderness'. 'I come' - where no enemy can follow me, where no temptation can assail me, where no weariness can distress me; but *these*, '*these* are in the world.'... I have been weary here, but I shall soon be weary no longer; the way has been rough and thorny, but it is all over, my haven is almost reached; yet *these*, '*these* are in the world!"¹

Even in this there remains great comfort. Yes, we are in this world, this world of sin, this world that sometimes raises itself against Christians with anger and persecution. But who is it that prays for us? It is Jesus who prays for us, the One who says "Now I am no longer in the world..." Ah, but He was in this world. There was a time when Jesus, our God, our Lord and Saviour, was also a Man who walked the streets of Jerusalem, who ate the bread kneaded by His mother's hands, who faced the ridicule of His own brothers, who felt the betrayal of His close companion. The truth is that Jesus is still a Man. He is glorified in heaven with a glorified human body but does not pray for us as an "ivory tower" Saviour. Jesus says "I am no longer in the world, but I was in the world. I know the world. I know its pain, its suffering, its sorrows and its ways. Therefore, I pray, Father keep them who remain in the world." Rejoice in this truth today!

TableTalk

Read some of these extra verses of how Jesus protected His disciples in His time on earth. Remember, He continues to pray for your protection even today in these same ways.

Read Matthew 15:1-3 (Jesus protected His disciples from the hatred of the Pharisees. All their attacks against the disciples were handled by Jesus.)

¹ An Expositional Commentary: The Gospel of John, vol. 4, James Montgomery Boice, pg. 1289