

UNSEARCHABLE RICHES ARE YOURS FOR THE TAKING

John 17:4-12

“In one of Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman’s meetings a man arose to give the following remarkable testimony: ‘I got off at the Pennsylvania depot as a tramp, and for a year I begged on the streets for a living. One day I touched a man on the shoulder and said, “Mister, please give me a dime.”’

“As soon as I saw his face, I recognized my father. “Father, don’t you know me?” I asked. Throwing his arms around me, he cried, “I have found you; all I have is yours.” Men, think of it, that I, a tramp, stood begging my father for ten cents, when for eighteen years he had been looking for me to give me all he was worth!”

“So the heavenly Father is waiting for you. Why not receive the unsearchable riches in Christ now (if you have not done so already)?”^{1 2}

The salvation plan of God was formed in eternity past, before the beginning of time. people had not yet been created but God knew they would rebel against Him.³ So He decided to provide a way for people to be saved. Even way back then ehe **Son of God** agreed to go to the earth as a Man so that He could provide the necessary payment for sin, and thereby restore the relationship of the sinful person to God by providing forgiveness to all those who would believe and accept Jesus as their Savior. This would then allow them to have eternal life in Heaven. The plan itself was guaranteed by the promise of God as Paul explains in Titus 1:1-2 NAS:

¹ *Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness,*
² *in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago (from before time began).*⁴

¹ Tan, Paul Lee: *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: A Treasury of Illustrations, Anecdotes, Facts and Quotations for Pastors, Teachers and Christian Workers*. Garland TX: Bible Communications, 1996, c1979

² Parentheses mine.

³ Eph. 1:4-5; cf. Matt. 25:34.

⁴ Parentheses mine.

Salvation gives us the hope of eternal life.

Do you remember John 17:3? *“This is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and the One You have sent—Jesus Christ.”* So what do we have here?

According to the promise of God, salvation (the forgiveness of our sins and reconciliation with God) brings eternal life in Heaven. Eternal life is the result of a knowledge of the saving grace that comes from trust and obedience toward God and Jesus Christ.

TRUST and OBEDIENCE = SALVATION = ETERNAL LIFE

The phrase *“long ages ago”* literally means, *“before time began,”* indicating that salvation has always been part of God's sovereign plan. In eternity past, He made a promise to save those whom He had chosen; the fulfillment of which is absolutely certain since *“it is impossible for God to lie.”*⁵ *“But to whom was that promise made, since there was no one around but God before time began?”*⁶

2 Timothy 1:9 NLT:

⁹ *For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because **that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus.***

The triune God made a promise to Himself, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say to one another within the godhead or Trinity.

Therefore, being very, very, very good cannot save a sinner, as some people believe. A sinner is saved because he/she followed the built-in instincts of every human being to find out as much as they can about God, and through that knowledge made a decision to trust in God's promises, one of which is that Jesus was sent to them because He is the only way their sin can be forgiven.

Ephesians 2:8-10 NLT:

⁸ *God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; **it is a gift from God.***

⁹ *Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.*

¹⁰ *For **we are God's masterpiece.** He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do*

⁵ Heb. 6:18; cf. Num. 23:19; 1 Sam. 15:29; John 14:6,17; 15:26.

⁶ John MacArthur, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary – John 12-21*, (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 245-253.

the good things he planned for us long ago.

When the Father, in eternity past, decided to redeem sinners, He did so with the intent of transforming their physical bodies to be like His Son's (Phil. 3:20-21).

1 John 3:2 NLT:

² *Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that **we will be like him**, for we will see him as he really is.*

In other words, when we die we will go to Heaven and initially we will have some form of body. But in the end times when the Church is raptured every believer will be given a physical body just like the one Christ was given when God raised Him from the dead. Because they will be like Christ in their glorified state, the redeemed will forever be a tribute to the Son, Jesus, reflecting His perfect goodness and proclaiming His eternal greatness.⁷

We will now move on to our passage for today.

John 17:4-12 HCSB:

⁴ *I have glorified You on the earth by completing the work You gave Me to do.*

⁵ *Now, Father, glorify Me in Your presence with **that glory I had with You before the world existed.***

⁶ *I have revealed Your name to the men You gave Me from the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.*

⁷ *Now they know that all things You have given to Me are from You,*

⁸ *because the words that You gave Me, I have given them. They have received them and have known for certain that I came from You. They have believed that You sent Me.*

⁹ *I pray for them. **I am not praying for the world but for those You have given Me,** because they are Yours.*

¹⁰ *All My things are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I have been glorified in them.*

¹¹ *I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, protect them by Your name that You have given Me, so that they may be **one** as We are one.*

¹² *While I was with them, I was protecting them by Your name that You have given Me. I guarded them and not one of them is lost, except the son of destruction, so that the Scripture may be fulfilled.*

Now just as God loves Jesus and wants Him to receive glory, Jesus' focus is directed to honoring and glorifying God by His sacrifice because of His love of the Father.

⁷ Ibid.

Thus when Jesus asked the Father to “*glorify Him,*” He was asking that God’s eternal plan for saving sinners be enacted exactly as God had planned it. If you look through the prayer in John 17 carefully, you will see that this is the only request that Jesus made for Himself. All He wanted was that God would permit Him to be used in death to fulfill His Father’s plan exactly as it had been designed. Thereby, through His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, the people would recognize that to do those things He must have been sent by God, thereby deserving glory and honor forever. The fact that Jesus shares the Father’s glory confirms His deity, since God will not give His glory to another (Isaiah 42:8; 48:11).⁸

Through this prayer, Jesus is telling the Father that He is ready, willing, and able to take the steps necessary to fulfill the promise God had made to Him in eternity past. But Jesus was not merely seeking His own glory. His perfectly righteous request was that by His sacrifice the Son might glorify the Father.

Can you imagine it? The God of creation, the CEO, so to speak, of the universe, sacrificed His precious Son to satisfy His judgment against the most vile of sinners. What would that tell people about the righteousness and holiness of God? Only a God who loved beyond any human understanding could make such a sacrifice. The death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus have demonstrated God’s grace, mercy, love, and righteousness in a most powerful way. God was truly glorified after these events, as was Jesus. God should also be glorified when He can point to all the believers that have received salvation and eternal life because of His Son’s death.

In his prayer Jesus speaks of what was and what will be from an eternal perspective. In both cases the Father is the source of everything, and Jesus is in a manner of speaking God’s agent. Jesus gave life to all creation, and now it is time for Him to give eternal life to those within that creation that are given Him by God. As with the Son, so too with the disciples; the Father is their source for all things.⁹ He gives them to the Son, and the Son gives them eternal life.

As we read earlier from Ephesians 2, all of this is by God’s grace. Both God’s will and the individual’s freedom to choose have been emphasized throughout this Gospel, but there is never any doubt that **it all depends on God’s grace.** Yet, there is an inevitable tragedy that goes along with the mercy of God; **it is offered to all, but received by only a few.**

John 17:4-5 NAS:

⁴ *"I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.* ⁵ *"Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with*

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ John 6:37, John 6:39; John 10:29; John 17:6; John 18:9.

You before the world was.

Do you see the theme? God glorifies Jesus and Jesus glorifies God. **Isn't that great?**

As His prayer indicates, Jesus was fully aware that, like everything else, the next few hours of time had been determined since eternity past and would have an incalculable effect regarding eternity future.¹⁰

Jesus' prayer for Himself in John 17:4-5 was based on His finished work (4:34) which included His obedience to death. "*Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross*" (Philippians 2:8 NAS). Jesus is asking God to return Him to His position of **glory** with the Father, which He held before His incarnation, and which was dependent upon His finished work on the cross.

John 17:6 NAS:

⁶ *"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.*

The small number of disciples was given by the Father to the Son (verses 2, 9, 24). They had been separated **out of the world (verse 14)** by the selection of the Father as a gift to Jesus (6:37).

With the words, "*They have kept Your Word*" (verse 6), Jesus praised His disciples for responding to the message of God through Him. Their faith in Jesus was a trust in His being One with the Father (17:8). This faith in Jesus was evidenced in their obedience to His words because **they believed** that God sent Him. (16:27).

Now as we listen in on this prayer of Jesus for His disciples, maybe we should reflect on something. As Jesus is praying for the disciples, He is also looking down through the centuries to His future followers (see verse 20). It might do us well to ask ourselves if this prayer has been answered in our lives. Have we, and do we, keep His Word? Can Christ say of us, "*He/she has kept Your Word*"?

John 17:7-10 NAS:

⁷ *"Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You;*

⁸ *for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me.*

⁹ *"I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours;*

¹⁰ *and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them.*

¹⁰ Ibid.

Christ's prayer in John 17:6-19 was specifically for the eleven apostles at that time. It does, however, apply to all believers who followed them and who read these verses today. Jesus requests two things in particular for these eleven apostles in His prayer to the Father. He asks that God "protect them" in verse 11 and that He "sanctify them," which means to make them holy, in verse 17. Jesus prayed this for them because they belonged to God. Look at verse 9. To whom do they belong? They belong to God who has ownership of them by creation and election (they are Yours). Jesus' words, "All My things are Yours, and Yours are Mine" makes it clear that Jesus is equal with the Father.

In Old Testament times God dwelt among the people and showed them His glory, the Shekinah glory through the pillar of fire and the cloud. When Jesus came to earth, God displayed His glory through the Son, as we saw in John 1:14 NAS:

¹⁴ *And the **Word** became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His **glory**, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Then Jesus' apostles glorified Him, John 17:10 NAS: *"I have been glorified in them."*

Then in John 17:11 NAS we read:

¹¹ *"And I am no more in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, the name which Thou hast given Me, **that they may be ONE, even as We are.***

Jesus, knowing that He would soon be returning to the Father in Heaven and leaving His disciples in the world, was entrusting them to pick up where He had left off in presenting God's plan of redemption to the world and in planting the Church. He therefore prayed for their protection.

The hatred that the world felt for Jesus would now be directed toward the apostles and later on toward many others who followed Jesus. Jesus called on His Father to protect them under this persecution because He knew the power of God's name and that God's name could overcome anything that might come against these apostles Jesus loved. Proverbs 18:10 makes this promise: *"The name of the Lord is a strong tower; The righteous runs into it and is safe"* (NAS).

Now pay careful attention here because this is very important. Jesus prayed that God would protect His apostles so that all believers could be unified as **one body**. He also prayed that this **unity** would be patterned after the **unity** that Jesus had with the Father. We will see this later in verses 21 and 22.

John 17:12 NAS:

¹² *"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.*

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus took care of the flock entrusted to Him by the Father. But **Judas** was an exception. He is here called "*the son of perdition.*" Judas was never a sheep and his true character was finally made clear as we are told in John 13:11 and 1 John 2:19. He was willing to betray Jesus for money.¹¹ Having prayed to the Father to protect the disciples, Jesus declared that He had protected them (verse 12). It is as if He was handing back the task to God.¹²

Jesus gave His disciples the revelation of the Father's name (John 17:6). The Old Testament Jew knew his God as "Jehovah," the great I AM (Ex. 3:11-14). Jesus took this sacred name "I AM" and made it meaningful to His disciples. He said such things as: "**I am the Bread of Life**" (John 6:35); "**I am the Light of the world**" (John 8:12); "**I am the Good Shepherd**" (John 10:11). In other words, Jesus used the Father's name to show His apostles that God was everything they needed.

Jesus also taught His disciples that God, the great **I AM**, was their **Heavenly Father**. In His messages to the Jews, Jesus made it clear that the Father had sent Him, that He was equal to the Father, and that His words and works came from the Father. It was a clear claim to be Deity, but initially they had difficulty believing Him.

In the Bible, "*name*" refers to "*nature*," because names so often were given to reveal something special about the nature of the person bearing the name. *Jacob* was a schemer, and his name comes from a Hebrew root that means "*to take by the heel*," which means to trip up, to deceive (Genesis 25:26). The name *Isaac* means "*laughter*" (Genesis 21:6) because he brought joy to Abraham and Sarah. Even the name *Jesus* reveals that He is the *Savior* (Matthew 1:21).¹³

"*I have manifested your name*" in verse 6 means "*I have revealed the nature of God.*" According to John 1:18 NLT: "*No one has ever seen God. But the one and only Son is himself God and is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.*" It was one of Jesus' tasks to reveal the Father to the Jews.¹⁴ Jesus was not about to reveal the glory of God to the disciples in one sitting. They could not have taken it all in according to John 16:12 NLT: "*There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can't bear it now.*"

Gradually, by the things that Jesus said and did, He spoon fed the disciples, teaching them about the nature of God. Furthermore, all believers are the Father's gift to His Son.

¹¹ Walvoord, John F.; Zuck, Roy B.; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:331.

¹² Carson, D. A.: *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*. 4th ed. Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994, S. Jn 17:1-6.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

The disciples had belonged to the Father by creation and by covenant (they were Jews), but now they belonged to the Son, and because they belonged to Him, they were precious in His sight! How He watches over all of us and even now prays for us! Whenever you feel as though the Lord has forgotten you, or that His love seems far away, read Romans 8:28–39 and rejoice!¹⁵

Warren Wiersbe has written:

“God has provided the divine resources for us to glorify Him and be faithful. We have **His Word** (John 17:7–8), and His **Word** reveals to us all that we have in Jesus Christ. The **Word** gives us faith and assurance. We have the Son of God interceding for us.¹⁶ Since the Father always answers the prayers of His Son as we learn in John 11:41–42, this intercessory ministry helps to keep us safe and secure.¹⁷

“We also have the fellowship of the Church: “*That they may be one, as we are*’ (John 17:11). The New Testament knows nothing of isolated believers; wherever you find saints, you find them in fellowship. Why? Because **God’s people need each other**. Jesus opened His Upper Room message by washing the disciples’ feet and teaching them to minister to one another. In the hours that would follow, these men (including confident Peter!) would discover how weak they were and how much they needed each other’s encouragement.”¹⁸

The believer, then, is secure in Christ for many reasons: the very nature of God, the nature of salvation, the glory of God, and the continuing ministry of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

Coming back to the issue of Judas then one might ask, was he secure? How did he fall? Why did Jesus not keep him safe? For the simple reason that *Judas was never one of Christ’s own*. Jesus faithfully kept all that the Father gave to Him, but Judas had never been given to Him by the Father. Judas was not a believer (John 6:64–71).¹⁹

Judas is not an example of a believer who “*lost his salvation*.” He is an example of an unbeliever who *pretended to have salvation* but was finally exposed as a fraud. Jesus keeps all whom the Father gives to Him (John 10:26–30).²⁰

¹⁵ Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. Jn 17:6.

¹⁶ John 17:9; Rom. 8:34; Heb. 4:14–16.

¹⁷ Op Cit., Wiersbe

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

In this prayer it is as if the Lord Jesus is handing in His final report to the Father. He hasn't died on the Cross yet; but, as far as God is concerned, He speaks of things which are not as if they are. Future tense for God is just as accurate as past tense. Our Lord Jesus is going to the Cross to die and then will rise again. On the Cross, He said, "*It is finished*" (John 19:30). That means our redemption was finished. He has done everything that was necessary. We can put a period there. We cannot add a thing to His finished work. Therefore, the Gospel of salvation is not what God is asking you to do, but what God is telling you that He has already done for you. It is your response to that which saves you.²¹

Now we cannot leave these verses without saying something about the doctrine of election, which we have dealt with earlier. But we really do like the comments made by **J. Vernon McGee** on the subject:

"I don't know as much about election as maybe I should know. I've read Hodge, Calvin, Thornwall, Shedd, and Strong on the subject, and they don't seem to know much more about it. The reason we know so little about election is because it is God's side, and there are a lot of things that God knows that we don't know.

"It is a wonderful thing to be able to listen to this prayer and to know that Jesus is at God's right hand talking to the Father about us. The Lord Jesus has talked to the Father about you today, if you are one of His.

"There is a mystical relationship between the Lord Jesus and His own. They belong to the Father and were given to Jesus Christ. I can't fathom its meaning. What a wonderful relationship!

"The Lord had given them the Words of the Father. That is important. He had not given them property or money or an automobile, but the Words of the Father. Jesus testifies here that these disciples believed that He came from the Father. They knew who He was. They did not understand His purpose and certainly not His death and resurrection, but they had made tremendous advances during the three years they had been with Him. They knew He had come from God, and they believed that God had sent Him.

"He prays for two wonderful things. He prays for us to be kept. You will be kept because you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and because your Savior is praying for you.

"His other request is that **we should be one**. He prays for the **unity**

²¹ Ibid

of believers. He's not praying for an ecumenical movement or that we all join the same denomination. There has been much wrong teaching about this. First of all, He prays to the Father that His own might be one. Notice that He isn't praying to us or to some church authority; He is praying to the Father. And He prays that **we should be one** "*as we are*"; that is, **as the Father and the Son are one**. The Father has answered every prayer of His Son, and He has answered this one. The Holy Spirit takes all true believers and baptizes them into the body of Christ, identifies them in the body of Christ. The disgrace of it all is that down here the believers are pretty well divided. But there is only one true church, and every believer in Jesus Christ is a member of that church. **It is called the body of Christ**.

“I wish you could have met me when I graduated from seminary. I was a smart boy then and I even had the answer to election and free will. But I have a little more sense than I had then, and I realize that we simply do not understand it.”²²

We do not have to understand or be able to explain everything about God. We only have to trust and obey. He has given us enough proof of who He is. If a person cannot accept the Bible as God's truth with all the evidence it provides, there is simply no hope for that person. But the converse is also true. If a person accepts the biblical truth about God and Jesus Christ and the salvation they have provided, all the riches of Heaven become theirs. What a glorious God we have!

²² J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1983), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, under: "Chapter 17."