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Holy Father Keep Them

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Series: Prayer: God's "Secret" Weapon

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Holy Father, Keep Them

Father,

There's so many things we have to thank You for. Our hearts leap with praise as we think of the grandeur of Your love for us, and of all that You do for us.

And we come to You this morning, Father, so aware that apart from You we can do no thing, not some things—no thing. Remind us this morning, Father, of the awesomeness and the grandeur and the wonder of our salvation.

We pray for Tom and for Alf that You would give them as they labor this week, a special sense of Your presence. And we pray for those around the world today who are laboring to bring the good news to people who have not heard, or to people who are in need of spiritual food around the world. We pray, our Father, that You would increase the burden on our hearts to give, to pray, and to go.

And we pray that at this hour and at this time we spend together, You would teach us.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Jesus was talking to His Father. As the cross loomed on the horizon of His life, He was sharing His heart; and He was demonstrating to His disciples and to us just how simple, and yet how wonderful, it is to be able to have a conversation with God.

It is, you remember, that marvelous, intimate talk between God, the Father, and God, the Son, that we have been studying. We have seen three great themes emerge: Glory, Unity, and Security. It is the last of those three that we address now. Oh, what comfort this passage ought to give to the child of God. Yet, what a warning it ought to send to us, as well.

The entire passage speaks to the subject of security, but several verses in particular will be of special interest in this study. We will look at those verses as we begin:

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven,

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and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

(John 17:1-3)

I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

(John 17:6-13)

There are three words that surface in this passage that must be defined and cross-referenced, if we are to understand this principle. They are “eternal,” “keep,” and “joy.” These words appear in sequence in this passage, and they form a progression of understanding that ought to make a decided difference in how we pray.

THIS IS LIFE ETERNAL

At the heart of Jesus’ prayer was a declaration of the power His Father had given to Him so that while on this planet, clothed in His humanity, He could bring glory to the Father’s name. That power, according to verse two, was so that:

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As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

(John 17:2)

Strategic goal #1 for God, the Son: Bring glory to the Father by giving a gift to someone who was a gift in the first place. If that sounds strange, bear with me. Jesus was saying that you and I were gifts from the Father to the Son. He gave us to Jesus as a love-gift. The Son, upon receiving us, was to give us something we never had, never could have, never would have, unless He gave it to us. That something was called *eternal life*. The only ones who received it were those the Father gave Him. How He did that is another subject, but suffice it to say He did. Now what is the eternal life that Jesus gave away? He knew we would ask, so He answered in advance.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

(John 17:3)

Eternal life is a relationship. Its characteristics are totally different from all other kinds of life both in quality and duration. It is different in quality, because it is one of God's qualities imparted to man. It is different in duration, because, by definition, it is the exact opposite of time. Think on those two principles with me for a moment, and I think you will begin to grasp just how enormous this principle is in God's scheme of things.

Eternal life is not something you attain, it is something you receive. It is an experiential knowledge of Jesus Christ as the one true God, sent from the Father to save man from sin. The word "experiential" differentiates it from that which is pure knowledge. You don't receive eternal life by knowing that Jesus Christ died for your sins. The devil knows that and trembles. You receive eternal life by *knowing Jesus Christ, who died for your sins*. Eternal life is a person. The word "life" denotes that it is a total transformation. That explains how the nature of God is imparted to man. The word "eternal" gives it a significance beyond our understanding, because it takes it out of the realm of the temporal and places it into the realm of the spiritual. It takes it out of the realm of that which can and will dissipate or deteriorate and places it into the realm of that which cannot decay, cannot decline, cannot diminish, cannot be lost.

Let's examine those two thoughts for a moment:

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1- Eternal life is different in quality, because it is one of God's qualities imparted to man. God is eternal. That is one of His names. That is one of His attributes. That is part of what makes God, God. As with all of His attributes, we receive them upon conversion by virtue of the Holy Spirit's being placed in us. Who He is, we become. We experience it only in part, because the sin nature still struggles within us for recognition; but we are to grow from one degree of glory to another as those attributes grow in ascendancy and in intensity in our lives. One day, *all of God's attributes will be enjoyed in their fullness, when we see Jesus face to face and we become like Him.* God is eternal. That is who and what He is. The Scripture says it:

The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms... (Deuteronomy 33:27a)

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

(I Timothy 1:17)

God's nature is eternal. We appropriate that quality and enjoy the benefits of that quality in varying degrees and, hopefully, in increasing degrees in this life. We cease fretting over time, because one day time will dissolve into eternity. We cease fearing death, because one day death will be gone in eternity. We suffer persecution joyfully, for we will be rewarded in eternity. So the more we grow in Christ, the more His eternal nature transforms us and gives us a spiritual perspective: one that is eternal.

One day we will experience that which is eternal in all its splendor. That which competes with that which is spiritual will be gone. We will enter eternity, where everything is eternal, and that which relates to the temporal will vanish at last. We have His eternal nature now, just as we have His love, His peace, His joy, and His truth. They are characteristics we see in part, and we know in part; but *when that which is perfect is come, that which is partial shall be done away* (see I Corinthians 13:9,10). Then, all of His nature will be ours to enjoy, and we will be just like Him. The reason we have eternal life is that we have Jesus, who is eternal life. We possess His eternal life *now*. We have that aspect of His nature, and *all other aspects of His nature, as well.*

2- Eternal life is also different in duration. Not only is eternal life a *quality* of life, a reflection of who God is; it is a *duration* of life, a reflection of the timelessness of God. Dictionaries define *eternal* in several ways including:

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lasting forever, without beginning or end; always existing; perpetual, ceaseless, endless, enduring, immutable.

Then it defines *eternity* as infinite time, without beginning or end.

The Bible contrasts “eternal” with such words as “temporal” and “perishes” or “perishing.” Just a few illustrations:

but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.

(John 4:14 NAS)

Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you, for on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal.

(John 6:27 NAS)

and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.

(John 10:28 NAS)

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

(Romans 6:23 NAS)

For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison,

while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.

(II Corinthians 4:17,18 NAS)

For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

(II Corinthians 5:1 NAS)

In every case, eternal life is contrasted with something that is temporary, fleeting, unstable, not lasting. And always, whenever the word “eternal” is used in Scripture, it is used to define that which never ends, never ceases, never changes, never varies, either in quality or duration. That is why God can be eternal. If eternal life could decay or decline or cease to be *exactly what it has always been*, then God could not be trusted, for He is eternal, and we are placing the total weight of our salvation upon His nature. If He could become in any way less effective, less powerful, less stable, or less secure, our hope would be in vain. But He is “the same yesterday, today, and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8). He cannot change, and His Word is the same yesterday, today, and forever, as well. “The grass withers, the flowers thereof fade, but the word of our

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God abideth forever.” (I Peter 1:24,25).

Forever means forever. It means “that which is eternal.” It will not change, cannot change, must not change. Those things which God deems eternal are the only things in the universe that will not one day be gone or be changed. But we have a different kind of hope. We have confident assurance that the life we have been given is eternal. Therefore, we can, with Peter, shout:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

(I Peter 1:3-5 NAS)

Many of our arguments about the security of the believer are based on experiences with people who claim to have been born again, but who seem to be in rebellion to the very name of God and, in particular, to the holiness of God. Be careful. If you are questioning how His eternal nature could abide in you without your help, you are also questioning how His truth could remain in you without your help; how His mercy could continue to uphold you without your help; how His grace could continue to empower you without your help. When you do that, you defy the very nature of God. You do not continue to receive mercy because you deserve it. You continue to receive mercy because an eternal God placed His eternal Spirit in your temporal body and guaranteed you an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and which is “reserved in heaven for you” (I Peter 1:4). Therefore, *unless His power is proved inadequate, you will have that mercy, that grace, that love, that holiness, and yes, that eternal nature, resident within you forever.*

That’s what the security of the believer is all about. It is all about God. Now, back to Jesus’ prayer: He is asking the Father for something special, and He is explaining to us just how the disciples (except for Judas, who was ordained in eternity past to allow his evil nature to be used for God’s glory) had been guarded against being lost before the Holy Spirit came. Jesus said, “I kept them.”

Does that mean they were sinless? That’s a joke. They spent

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much of their time arguing over which of them would get to sit in the front row and be noticed when the kingdom came. Does that even mean that they never at any time so rebelled against God that the world around them would stand in amazement that they called themselves Christians? Hardly. Look at Simon Peter. He was the chairman of the board. He was the spokesman for this band of confused followers. Yet, when the moment of truth came, he cursed and denied that he even knew the Lord of glory. Was he, at that time, lost? No. Jesus, in eternity past, knew of Simon's rebellion, and when Peter went astray, *Jesus prayed for Him*.

We know that Jesus knew beforehand that Peter would make a mess of things. He told him he would. He said, "Pete, before sundown today, you're going to curse and deny you ever knew me." Pete was a spiritual lad, though. (Or so he thought.)

"Lord, that will never happen to me!" he responded. "I'm Captain Courageous. I'm Peter Perfection. I'm the illustrious leader." Jesus knew two things. He knew Peter needed to be humbled, and He knew Peter needed more compassion for sinners if he was going to ever be used the way he needed to be used. So as Peter rebelled, Jesus prayed, and Jesus waited.

You say, "But I know a preacher who went astray," or "I know a deacon who messed up his life." This was Simon Peter. This was the one the Master called to His side afterwards, the one He commissioned to feed His sheep. No, they did not yet possess the Holy Spirit, but that proves the point even more. We now have "the earnest of our inheritance," the down payment of our salvation, living in us. We can ignore Him, but we cannot remove Him. He is eternal. And now we understand what was happening. Until the time when the Spirit would become our eternal guard, protecting our eternal status, Jesus took the responsibility for the eleven, and He said to the Father,

And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

(John 17:11,12)

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HOLY FATHER, KEEP THEM

The Master was giving us His secret. Until He went to send the Spirit, He had “kept” these eleven men from losing this thing called “eternal life.” What made them worthy of such an incredible gift? Look at what made Simon Peter worthy.

And Simon Peter answered and said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:16)

But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus’ feet, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” (Luke 5:8 NAS)

Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.” (John 6:68 NAS)

Peter understood.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (John 17:3)

He had come to Christ, acknowledging His sin, and received Him as the Son of the Living God. When He did, Jesus took the responsibility for “keeping” him, until He could return to the Father and send His Spirit who would “keep” Him forever. Peter’s later denial that he never knew the Christ did not remove him from his eternal state. He was placed “in Christ” when He acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ. He weakened at times. He fretted at times. He lost it at times. He even denied his relationship with Jesus existed. He let go of God.

God never let go of him. He couldn’t. He had given him a gift, remember? He had given him eternal life. In John 10, He reminded them it was a gift that could never be taken back.

And I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand.

My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.

I and the Father are one. (John 10:28-30 NAS)

Eternal life. Never perish. No one shall snatch them. No one. Why not? They would have to be stronger than the Father to do that. And Jesus and the Father were one. And whoever belonged to Him belonged to the Father, and whoever belonged to the Father belonged to Him. That’s what He said again in John 17:

I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which

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thou hast given me; for they are thine.

And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified
in them. (John 17:9,10)

The reason the eleven were still guaranteed eternal life? Were they so spiritual? Were they so faithful? Were they so adorable? Give me a break. Not one of them even stood by Him in His hour of need. Not one. No, Jesus had kept them. Now, He was giving them (and us) back to the Father, so the Father could keep them and us forever. Forever? Yes, Beloved, forever. He gave unto us eternal life, and we shall never perish. He said, "Holy Father, keep them." Since He and the Father were one; of course, He agreed.

What did He mean by the word keep? That's the second word we want to explore. When Jesus said, I kept, the word was in the imperfect tense. It meant "I continued to keep." It was a process. The emphasis was on the "I". It was "I" kept them. Now, "You" keep them. He was holding us firmly in His precious hands, soon to be marred by the print of nails, handing us over into the Father's hands, where no one could touch us, take us, or destroy our eternal lives. No one fell through the cracks. He didn't drop any of us in the handoff. Judas was never one of His. He was the "son of perdition." The Bible expositor, Vincent, says it was a play on words. He said, "None of them is perished but the son of perishing." But all who were His and all who ever would be His were given eternal life, and the Father was asked by the Son to keep them even as He had kept them.

That word keep is an incredible word. If you look it up in the dictionary, it has something like 40 different definitions and each one of them makes it richer. I've taken just a few of those and listed them for you because they all seem to apply to our relationship with God.

To keep:

to cause to continue in a given place

(to *keep* a light burning)

to maintain in a given state or condition

(he *keeps* his car up)

to hold in custody under guard

(they *kept* him in jail)

to associate with or be identified with

(she *keeps* that kind of company)

to hold back or restrain

(they *kept* the child from falling)

to conform to or be faithful

(he *kept* his word)

to guard or protect

(he *kept* her from harm)

to take care of

(they *kept* their sheep)

Jesus is keeping us. He is *causing us to continue in a given place*. We are in Christ, and no one can take us out of His Father's hands. He is *holding us under guard*. The intruder cannot take us. He is *maintaining our relationship*. His Spirit even intercedes for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered. He is *holding or restraining us from falling*.

He is *conforming us*. He is shaping us into His own image. He is *protecting us*. He is *taking care of us*. Keeping means all of those things. It is so much more than keeping us out of hell. It is a process by which an eternal God is transforming that which had its focus totally on the physical into that which is being changed in ever increasing splendor into that which is spiritual and eternal. In the process, His eternal nature is indwelling us, assuring us that the process will go on and that ultimately, we will experience eternity in the presence of our Eternal God because His Eternal Spirit has guaranteed it.

Perhaps, the most descriptive word in the dictionary for that word keep, however, is its use as a noun. Webster defines it this way: keep is the innermost and strongest structure or central tower of a medieval castle.

One writer says this: "The Lord is our keep." This word has its origins in the design of the ancient French and English castles. The keep was the strongest fortification of the compound and the final place of resort in case of siege or attack. Here the most valiant warriors would make their last stand when all else had been lost. A keep was to be impregnable to the enemy, and every architectural scheme was used to maintain absolute security. Though no man-made keep was ever 100% secure, it was always the safest place to be. God has a keep. And because He is omnipotent, when He places someone in the keep of His castle, they are secure forever.

The enemy may bombard the gates of the structure with all of

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his ammunition. The doors may seem to move. The windows may rattle. The tower may sway to and fro. But the edifice will stand. It is secure. No one is able to take us out of the keep. A loving God keeps us from fleeing where our souls could be destroyed. We may experience hurt from banging our heads against the wall of His will. We may become fearful and depressed because we defamed His name or even denied we ever knew Him. We may have destroyed our testimony. But if we have ever been placed in the keep, we are secure: both from ourselves and from the enemy.

When you said yes to Jesus and exchanged your life for His, He placed you in that keep and gave to you eternal life: life that is unending, imperishable, unfading, unchanging. You did not deserve it then. You do not deserve it now. If you were to serve Him faithfully for ten thousand years, you would deserve it no more than you do now. You are not in the keep because you deserve to be there. You will not remain in the keep because you deserve to remain there. A loving, omnipotent God put you there and gave you that aspect of His character known as His eternal nature, and with that resident within you, *you shall never perish*. No one in the keep perishes. No one.

THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE MY JOY

How should this good news affect us? We know that it does not mean we can “continue in sin that grace may abound”. Paul said, “God forbid.” It does, however, mean several things.

One thing it means is that we can ask and increasingly appropriate something that the Father gave to us called joy. The next verse says,

And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world,
that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

(John 17:13)

The Master said He was sharing these truths with them even as He prayed to the Father, so they and we could experience something no unbeliever can ever experience: His joy fulfilled in us. It is not our joy extended, nor the world’s joy multiplied. His joy fulfilled in us. His joy is an extension of His eternal nature. Look at where the Scripture says joy comes from:

These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. (John 15:11)

Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall

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receive, that your joy may be full. (John 16:24)

Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance. (Acts 2:28)

And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost. (Acts 13:52)

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. (Acts 20:24)

And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. (Romans 5:11)

For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. (Romans 14:17)

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. (Romans 15:13)

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, (Galatians 5:22)

Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: (I Peter 1:8)

Joy defined is that quiet confidence in the nature of God that is unaffected by feelings or circumstances. It is a gentle rest in the arms of the One who is keeping us, especially when the world would have no cause for joy. That is why we are told:

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, (James 1:2 NAS)

But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. (I Peter 4:13)

God's joy indwells us and overtakes us when the uncertainties of life cause us to crawl up into the keep and rest. When we see no earthly deliverance, our joy ought to be multiplied. Why? Because the Father is keeping us. He is maintaining our relationship with Him. He is restraining the evil one from taking us out of the Father's hand. He is conforming us to His nature, and He is keeping us as only the Good Shepherd keeps His sheep. We are safe. We are secure. The battles may rage. The enemy may fire his heavy artillery. We may falter and fail. We may even end up in

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disgrace and dishonor. God forbid, but we may. Like Peter, we may even, in a moment of weakness, cry out, “I never knew Him!” We may, in the energy of the flesh, even bang our heads against the doorway of eternity and dare God to let us out.

He won't. He can't. He's God. And in eternity past, He, knowing you would be one of those who “believed on Him through their word,” placed you in the keep forever. Do you deserve it? Absolutely not. Will you ever earn the right to be there? Positively not. But will anyone or anything, even your own foolish straying, ever release you from his grasp? No! No one and no thing can ever take you out of the Father's hands. The Father gave you to the Son, and no one can take you out of His hands. He said so. He cannot lie, and He cannot change His word. If you have come to Him on His terms and been born again, you are now being “kept by the power of God unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (I Peter 1:5). Praise God, you are eternally safe.

How ought that to affect the way we pray? That, remember, is what Jesus was doing. He was praying. He was praying, and He was praising. He was proclaiming truth so we could rest in that truth. Here are some ways these promises ought to affect the way we pray and the way we live:

1- It means we ought never to pray without first thanking God.

We are grateful that He has saved us and is keeping us “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy” (Titus 3:5a).

I believe we rush into the presence of God presumptuously, acknowledging by being there that He did it all and never stop to say, “Oh, dear God, but for Your incredible mercy and grace I would be lost and bound for an eternity in hell. I want to thank You. I want to praise You. I want to worship You.” I don't know how many of you do that, but I know of the myriad of times I rush into God's presence without ever stopping to say thank You— thank You that You saved me and thank You that in spite of the rebellion in my heart You keep on loving me.

Praise Him for who He is. He's the Eternal One and praise Him for what that means. It means that you who are in Christ are eternal as well. Jesus was praying to His Father that He would take the strange, wandering, strong-willed sheep and place them in the sheepfold of the castle where they would never perish. Don't take your salvation for granted, Beloved. You are not there because

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you are so spiritual; you are there because an eternal God put His eternal Spirit in your heart. Praise Him every single day.

2- It means that our prayer lives should be clothed in humility.

We can pray because we are in Christ. We do not deserve so rich a privilege. We are the Son's because the Father gave us to the Son. We are the Father's because whoever belongs to the Son belongs to the Father. We are unworthy peasants who have been invited into the palace of the Royal One and made to be one of His. Dare we strut in and dare God or challenge God based on who we are? God forbid.

3- It means we ought never to stop praying for those who are in Christ but out of His will. The normal bent is to rejoice in their humiliation and assume they deserve it. Beloved, we all deserve it. Perhaps they made wrong choices. But, like Simon Peter, Jesus even now is praying for them. He expects us to do the same. He wants to forgive them, restore them, and use even their wrong choices to remake them more perfectly into His likeness. Don't judge them. Pray for them. If they are in the keep, they are still His. If they are still His, He is longing for them to return from the far country. Pray often and pray humbly. It could be you.

4- Pray daily that you will never disgrace His name because you have been presumptuous with His grace. The great danger in understanding the security of the believer is that we will understand just enough to rejoice in our safety, but not enough to be aware of our responsibility. Jesus went on to say, "they are not of the world, but I am sending them into the world." One thing is for sure. We are the only blackboard Jesus has to draw on. If we allow our lives to degenerate into unholiness or apathy and disgrace His name *just because we are assured of our salvation*, we do not understand the principle of eternal rewards, and we do not understand how sin breaks the heart of God. The more aware we become of our eternal nature, the more sensitive we ought to become of our eternal calling. As He who has called us is holy, so *we should be holy in all that we do.*

To assure us of our salvation? No, our salvation is secure. We are to live holy lives because He who is the Holy One abides in us. And in humility and gratitude that we can never perish, we ought to place a guard about our hearts and keep them the way He keeps us.

What a wonderful God we have. What a priceless salvation we possess. What a guaranteed future we have.

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Let's pray together in closing,

Now unto him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,

To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen.

(Jude 24,25)

Our Father and our God,

What presumptuous fools we are. We come straight into Your presence convinced of our salvation, but never stopping to realize the awesomeness of the price You paid and the miracle that we are eternally Yours in spite of everything. And, Father, we've come to praise You this morning that those of us who have come to you by way of the Mercy Seat and received Your eternal salvation are in the keep forever. The enemy may bombard us and bomb us, and do everything in his power to remove us. We may even cooperate. We may, like Peter, even reach a time when we bang our heads against the wall and ask to get out.

We praise you, God, that You can keep us. Father, keep us, we pray, and teach us to pray for those who are being kept by the power of God, those who are struggling and who have perhaps done things that have damaged their lives and the testimony of Your Name. May they understand, Father, that You who keep them in Your keep are waiting even this moment for them to return to that level of fellowship that is theirs, and experience once again the joy that is designed for those who are in the keep.

We pray for any here this morning, Father, who are not certain that they are in the keep that they are in Your hands but they're eternally secure. May this very moment the weight of the sin in their lives weigh them down and may they cry out in their spirits, "Dear Lord Jesus, forgive me, cleanse me, come into my heart and keep me forever."

In His name we ask it,

Amen

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