

The SHEPHERD
AS
THEOLOGIAN

John MacArthur
GENERAL EDITOR



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THE SHEPHERD AS THEOLOGIAN

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INTRODUCTION

For nearly four decades, the Shepherds' Conference has been committed to what the Reformers began 500 years ago.

The essence of the Reformation was to rescue the Word from the shackles of Roman Catholic tyranny, corruption, and heresy. The Reformers knew the significance of getting back to the Word, as John Calvin wrote: "Christ reigns whenever He subdues the world to Himself by the preaching of His Word." That is why the goal of the Shepherds' Conference has always been to live out Paul's mandate to Timothy: "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2).

At the Shepherds' Conference we've had the unique privilege to participate in encouraging and equipping men to declare the truth. What started as a small gathering of 159 individuals has, by God's grace, blossomed into an international movement with thousands in attendance each spring. Over the years, pastors from every state and nearly 100 countries have come to the conference to be challenged and encouraged in the areas of preaching, theology, leadership, discipleship, and counseling.

Since its inception, the Shepherds' Conference has featured hundreds of sermons specifically directed at pastors and church leaders. Because the truth of God's Word is timeless, those messages are still as rich and powerful today as when they were first preached. That is why I was so

grateful when Harvest House Publishers approached me about publishing this third volume—a collection of the most memorable Shepherds' Conference messages on various theological topics.

A fundamental quality that set the Reformers apart from today's modern pastors is that they were theologians and biblical scholars. However, for a couple of centuries now, pastors have outsourced doctrine to the academy. The pastor must once again become the theologian, biblical scholar, and guardian of sound doctrine.

My desire has been for the Shepherds' Conference to participate in the multiplication of pastor-theologians. May this book help all spiritual leaders, whether you've been to the Shepherds' Conference or not, think deeply about the things of God. As you read it, my prayer is that your passion for truth will burn brighter and your resolve for Christ's glory will grow stronger as you seek to serve and lead His church.

For the Great Shepherd,

John MacArthur

THE LORD'S GREATEST PRAYER, PART 1

“Holy Father, keep them in Your name,
the name which You have given Me.”

JOHN 17:11

THE LORD'S GREATEST PRAYER, PART 1

John MacArthur

Shepherds' Conference 2016

John 17

No profession in the world suffers from a more serious lack of clarity, when it comes to the basic requirements of the job, as the pastorate. Everyone but pastors seems to know what their job is. In fact, if we are honest, clergy malpractice goes on everywhere, all the time. It is ubiquitous. It is pandemic. There is widespread confusion about what it means to be a pastor, and widespread indifference to prescribed biblical duties. As a result, the church has no concept of what the pastor is to be or do.

Where Is the Pastor-Theologian?

One thing is clear: Most pastors have no interest in being theologians, nor do their congregations expect them to be. The devolution of theology and biblical scholarship as a serious matter for Christians can be traced back to the absence of doctrine and careful biblical scholarship in the pulpit. This is a dereliction of duty. This is clergy malpractice. The pastorate is no longer an intellectual calling, and no longer do pastors provide serious intellectual leadership. Today's pastors do not move in the realm of theology; instead, they manage programs. They give uplifting talks, apply culturally invented principles, and pour their energy into everything but

scholarship—everything but an intense study of the text, which yields sound doctrine.

They are practitioners rather than theologians. At best, today's pastors broker other people's ideas, which are selected carefully by their own whims and desires and the popularity of certain people. Pastors have become middle managers who broker other people's theology and other people's ideas. Whatever happened to speaking the things fitting for sound doctrine? For the goal of biblical exposition is doctrine first—to draw out of the text the doctrine, the truth—and then to show its implications, application, and exhortation. Above all other things, the pastor is to teach doctrine.

Not only that, but the pastor is also the guardian of sound doctrine. He is to protect the theological integrity of divine truth before his people, in his place, and in his generation. For a couple of centuries now, pastors have outsourced doctrine to the academy.

If you were to go back to the nineteenth century, the majority of university presidents in the United States were ordained pastors. Things have changed since then. In 1977 (after I had been at Grace Community Church for about 8 years), I received a phone call from James Montgomery Boice, and he asked me if I would come and serve on the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy that produced the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy. I was shocked. I was just a local pastor here at Grace Community Church, I was in my thirties, and I was out of my league. When I got to the first meeting in Chicago, I was stunned by the fact that there were only 2 pastors—myself and Jim Boice. The other 98 men came from academic institutions. And the fact that they picked me says something about how difficult it was to find somebody else to go with Boice! While there I sat in conversations with Jim Boice and Roger Nicole, I kept my lips sealed. I did not want them to know how ignorant I was, so I just nodded like I understood what was going on.

Pastors have abandoned their high calling and substituted it with lesser functions. Their success, reputation, and sense of accomplishment is achieved by musical content, fashion, novelty, personality, and marketing savvy. Rarely do you find a pastor known as a theologian—as a biblical scholar. Rarely are there minds given to the mastery of Scripture and

its doctrinal truth. Sadly, it is a difficult time for those who do understand their calling and who are experts in the interpretation, exposition, and doctrine of the Bible, because they are considered to be an anomaly. This has to change. Pastors must become theologians, biblical scholars, and guardians of sound doctrine.

In reality, *de facto* pastors are the theologians of the church, not the professors in institutions. The church understands theology from their pastor, and not from professional academics. Sinclair Ferguson said, “We have made little or no impression on the world for the very reason that gospel doctrine has made a correspondingly slight impression on us.”¹ That is a tragic reality. Every significant pastor in church history, the names of whom you know, has been a heavyweight in theology. They all developed pastoral training institutions because the highest form of matured ecclesiology is the multiplication of pastor-theologians.

It was around 1650 that the Westminster Confession was developed. There were 121 scholars that spent years refining that great confession. They were the brightest minds, the theological heavyweights, and the biblical scholars of their day. Of the 121, all of them were pastors. We need to take theology back in the church. The academy has proven to be a very unsafe place for the Bible, and we need to take it back.

The academy started taking over after the Enlightenment took theology away from the church, and since the nineteenth century, pastors have been steadily forfeiting scholarly biblical theological influence. In our lifetime, the pastors who recognize the need to correct this travesty have all been working to salvage the Bible from academia.

Theology's Significance

How important is theology? The word itself means a divine propositional truth revealed in Scripture, which is the pastor's stock-in-trade. Doctrine is the foundation of absolutely everything. Doctrine is the structure of one's beliefs and convictions—the things that control our lives.

In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul made an interesting comment as he described what motivated him. We all understand how much the apostle endured for the sake of Christ, how much he suffered, and how challenging his ministry was. As he neared the end of his life, he wrote that even everyone in

Asia had forsaken him. The agonies that he went through are laid out in 2 Corinthians. We look at a man like that and ask, “What drove him? What moved him and kept him on course?” The answer is given in this statement: “The love of Christ controls us” (verse 14). It was the love of Christ that drove Paul.

If you were to ask most people about this today, they would say God loves everyone in the world equally and unconditionally. So what is Paul talking about? He explained, “Having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf” (verses 14-15). Those two verses teach particular redemption—limited atonement. Jesus died for the all who died in Him. Paul was saying that his motivation was not that the death of Jesus Christ was some kind of potential expression of love, but that Christ died and rose for Paul personally. It was the apostle’s understanding of particular redemption and a limited atonement that motivated him. He was Christ’s!

Does theology matter? Does it change how you view life? Yes! But sadly, the church has doctrinal anemia, and that is why so many pastors who are considered to be successful have no interest in it.

Theological Revival from John 17

My concern is to help you to think about theology. To do that, let’s look to John 17. Deep into the darkness of the Friday morning of Passion Week, Judas was already gathering the group that would come into the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus had left the upper room, gone through Jerusalem to the east, and was heading toward the garden, where He would be arrested, and later that day, crucified. He had given promises and warnings to His disciples through chapters 13, 14, 15, and 16. Then, in their presence so they could hear, Jesus prayed the words of John 17. It is a breathtaking experience to read that prayer.

Back in Exodus 28, God had established the tabernacle, the priesthood, and even went so far as to define the clothing that the high priest was to wear. The priest was to put on a garment that represented the 12 tribes of Israel so that when he went in to the Holy of Holies to offer atonement on

the Day of Atonement, and to offer incense as a symbol of prayers, he carried on his shoulders and over his heart the people of God, Israel.

That is exactly what happened in John 17. The great high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, had gone into the heavenly holy of holies and was carrying His beloved people on His shoulders and on His heart. He did this in the presence of the Father. In the Old Testament, the high priest went into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement and came out rapidly. But Christ went in, sat down, and He is still there. We are reminded in Hebrews 7 that He is ever living to make intercession for us—He is praying us into heaven. And John 17 depicts for us the present work of the Lord Jesus. Hebrews tells us that He is doing it; John 17 shows us His very words.

**This high priestly prayer is the greatest
ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

It is sad to me, given the incomparable uniqueness of this event, how it has been diminished in the church. I don't know that I've ever heard a sermon on John 17. We love to talk about the cross. We love to talk about the death of Christ and His resurrection—and we should. We love to talk about the cross and the resurrection as the fulfillment of prophecy, as actual history recorded in the Gospels, and as it is reflected on by the New Testament writers. I submit that both of those glorious events—the death and the resurrection of Christ—fall below the reality of John 17. This high priestly prayer is the greatest ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Does that surprise you? If you want to contemplate something that will contribute to your sanctification, you need to learn this work of Jesus.

“Much More Then”

Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in

which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1-2). The focus of this text is that we have been justified.

Paul went on to write, “For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (verses 6-8). We love that truth of the cross, and we must!

Now look at the first words of verse 9: “Much more then...” Much more than the cross? “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.” Paul declared that having now been justified by Jesus’ blood, “we shall [continue to] be saved from the wrath of God through Him.” The apostle went on, “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (verse 10).

Paul’s comparison is that though the cross and resurrection of Jesus is an amazing truth, there is more to our salvation, which is the truth that we are being saved by His life. In verse 15, the apostle wrote, “The free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.” Paul was comparing Adam to Christ, and he used the same exact words that we just read earlier in verse 9: “much more.”

Verse 17 says, “If by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.” Understand that the work of Christ is much more, comparatively speaking, than the work of Adam. We acknowledge how significant that “much more” is. And as the work of Christ is much more than what Adam did, so what Christ does for us alive is much more than His death.

Hebrews 9:12-14 reads,

Not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having

obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Christ's sacrifice is much more than the animal sacrifices. Christ is much more than Adam, and so the work of Christ, who ever lives to bring us to glory, is much more than the work of the cross. He died in hours. He rose in days. He ever lives to make intercession!

Hebrews 7:23-25 should help solidify this truth: "The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

How does this escape us? And in light of this truth, all of a sudden John 17 becomes a precious treasure of incalculable value. This is Jesus' intermediary mediating ministry. In John 17 we meet the mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and here He prays for His people.

Comfort in Theology

The entire prayer in John 17 is theology and doctrine. Apparently, if you do not have theology, not only can you not preach, you can't even pray. Here we find Jesus basing His entire ministry of intercession on sound doctrine; He pleads doctrine before His Father. This portion of Scripture is essentially a prayed systematic theological document on soteriology. And why would we expect anything less of Jesus, since He is the truth? Jesus prayed in the hearing of the 11 and all of us, for He wants all of us to understand this prayer.

We read in John 17:13, "Now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves." There is only one reason this prayer is here: for the Christian's joy. We know that the disciples that night needed a lot of joy. This is the Christ who comforts

all of us with sound doctrine. He prays the theology of the Father back to the Father, knowing the Father will answer.

For whom does He pray this? Verse 9 says, “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.” Jesus asked on behalf of the disciples and all those who believed. Also in verse 20: “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word.” Jesus prayed for all believers—those present at that time, and those who would follow through the rest of redemptive history. I am convinced that this is the most comforting chapter in the Bible because the security of the Christian’s salvation is the most comforting truth we can know.

Into the Holy of Holies

Let us go into the holy of holies here and listen to the divine theologian praying us into heaven. This prayer is a preview of what Jesus would be doing after His ascension until the end of redemptive history. It reveals a transition from His earthly ministry to believers to His heavenly ministry for believers. The requests we find in John 17 have been offered constantly by Jesus for the last 2000 years, and He will continue to offer them until all of God’s children are safely in heaven. This is the real Lord’s Prayer, because only He could pray it. The prayer in Matthew 6 is not the Lord’s Prayer, it is the Disciples’ Prayer because the Lord could not pray it. He could not say, “Forgive us our transgressions,” for He never sinned. John 17 is the Lord’s Prayer, and the Lord prayed in the opening verses for the Father to bring Him to heaven—to bring Him safely through the dramatic events that were going to take place immediately after this time of prayer.

John 17:1-5 is a prayer for Jesus’ own glory. He asked to be glorified so that He could be put in place to intercede for the redeemed. From verse 6 to the end of the chapter, He lifts an intercessory prayer for believers—for us. And this mediating ministry of Jesus Christ is going on even at this very moment. We see here the theology from the perfect theologian with absolutely perfect theology.

Salvation and the Trinity

Salvation begins with the doctrine of God, and Jesus teaches us about the Father in His prayer. We read in John 17:11, “Holy Father,” and verse

25, “righteous Father.” In verse 3 we learn that there is only one true God, the only eternal noncontingent being, and no one is like Him; everything else is contingent and dependent on Him for existence. However, to say that God is righteous, holy, and the only God does not inherently compel any act of kindness toward anyone. This is where there has been confusion recently regarding God and Allah. They are not the same. For Allah has been designed as a single solitary eternal being, not a trinity, who by virtue of his eternal singleness cannot love because there has never been anyone to love. Forever he has been one and only one. Allah possesses no relational attributes. How could he be loving when he is a single solitary person everlastingly? Allah is a form of the devil, and that is why there is no love, grace, mercy, and compassion in Islam.

In verses 23 and 24 of this chapter, Jesus made an amazing statement as He spoke to the Father: “I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” He continued in verse 26, “And I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” Jesus was saying that the definition of relationship in the Trinity is everlasting love. The true God is love because the true God has always loved.

There is more about the doctrine of God in verse 1: “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You.” Here we meet the eternal Son. Again in verse 5: “Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” Now we know that the Father and the Son are defined by a loving relationship that has been from all eternity. The Father and the Son share an eternal nature, eternal love, and eternal glory.

That is why John began his Gospel account, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being” (John 1:1-3). In verse 14 of that same chapter he wrote, “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten

from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Then in verse 18 we read, “No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.” The apostle Paul also understood this when he explained that in Christ “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3); “in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form” (2:9).

The foundation of salvation is a triune, holy, eternal, and loving God. A single god with no capacity to love has no interest in saving anyone. But the God of the Bible is defined by love. Jesus is pre-existent with God, co-existent with God, and self-existent with God.

In John 17, the Son was asking to be taken back to heaven and back to the eternal unity, love, and glory that He everlastingly had shared with the Father. It is as if Jesus was saying, “Father, take Me back because of who I am. You gave Me authority over all flesh; You have allowed Me to give eternal life. This is who I am. I am the eternal life because of what I’ve done. I’ve glorified You on the earth. I’ve accomplished the work You gave Me to do. Now take Me back.” Here is the real personhood of the Trinity being demonstrated. Salvation exists because God is triune and God is love.

Another stunning statement about the nature of God is found in John 17:10: “All things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine.” As mere mortals, we could join in the first part of this verse and say, “All things that are mine are Yours,” but we could not say the second half: “All things that are Yours are mine.” The only being who could make that statement is God.

The doctrines of salvation begin in the relationship of the Father and the Son in the Trinity. Paul wrote to Timothy about this God “who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity” (2 Timothy 1:9). Redemptive history began as a plan within the Trinity, and because God is love, He desired to bring to Himself many more sons to love.

Salvation and Election

The second important doctrine within soteriology is the doctrine of election. The people to whom the eternal Son gives eternal life are clearly

identified. Jesus said in John 17:2, "He may give eternal life." To whom does He give that eternal life? He gave us the answer in verse 9: "I do not ask on behalf of the world." Jesus was uniquely praying for all whom the Father had given to Him (John 17:2). Then in verse 11, Jesus used the same language: "Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me." As clearly as the Father has given a name to the Son, He has given people to the Son.

This is not the first occurrence of this truth in John's Gospel. In John 6:37, Jesus said, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." It is important to note that all the Father gives to Jesus will come to Him, and those who come to Him, He will not reject. This falls into the category of what theologians have called irresistible grace. Why? "For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day" (verses 38-39). Again He said in verse 44, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day." Then again in verse 65: "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." This is the doctrine of divine sovereign election.

How did God choose whom He would give to Jesus? The only answer to that is found in two places. First, John 17:6 says, "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." Then in John 17:9 we read, "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." Believers belong to God based on His sovereign decree and uninfluenced choice. This is clearly what is meant when Scripture says, "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4).

The book of Revelation contains a reference about certain names written, from before the foundation of the world, in the Lamb's book of life. The Father draws them at the appropriate time in history and gives them as a love gift to the Son. The Son receives them, and then His responsibility is to make sure they get to glory, and that is why He incessantly prays us into heaven. For every purpose of God there is a means. The purpose

of God is to bring us to glory, and the means is the intercession of Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 17:9, “I ask on their behalf.” Jesus prays for those who are the Father’s by choice—He does not ask for the world. Then in verse 20 we read, “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word.” Jesus’ prayer stretches through all of redemptive history.

Now, there are many people who say, “Christ died for the whole world.” If Christ died for the entire world, then His will was at odds with the Father’s. For the Father willed to save those whom He chose; therefore, Christ could not have died for the whole world or He would have been out of the will of the Father. It would be like saying the Father was a Calvinist and the Son was an Arminian, which is audacious, for there is only one will in the Trinity. Jesus does not pray for those who are not the Father’s, nor did He die for those who are not the Father’s.

What about Judas? John 17:12 explains, “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.” Judas was not an exception, for he did exactly what Scripture said he would do. He never was a son of God; he was always a son of destruction and damnation.

God is defined as love, and His love is so vast that it stretches beyond even the fulfillment of loving the Son and the Spirit. He wants many sons to love, and so He chooses them, gives them to the Son, and the Son grants them eternal life and intercedes for them.

Salvation and the Incarnation

For all of this to have taken place, sinners needed a Savior, for the Father could not bring unrighteous people to heaven. That leads to the third doctrine—the doctrine of the incarnation. We have already seen the deity of Christ indicated as we looked at the Trinity, but we also see His humanity in John 17. In verse 8 Jesus said, “I came forth from You.” That is the incarnation, the virgin birth. Similarly, in verse 3 we read, “Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” Then again in verse 18, “As You sent Me into the world”; verse 21, “You sent Me”; verse 23, “You sent Me,” and verse 25, “You sent Me.”

Nearly 30 times in the Gospel of John, Jesus said He was sent by the Father. He indicated His humanity again in John 17:4: "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do." And in verse 13, He anticipated returning back through the ascension. There are indications all through this chapter of Jesus' deity and humanity.

More importantly, consider also His work. In verse 4 Jesus prayed, "I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do." Understanding the incarnation entails you to understand not only the nature of Christ, but also the work of Christ. He was given the task of providing eternal life to the chosen, and by what work would He do that? There were two necessary realities.

Atonement

First, Jesus had to make atonement for sins. Theologians call this passive righteousness. He came to give His life a ransom for many. He bore in His own body our sins: "He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5). He had to die as a substitutionary sacrifice for His bride. He had to pay the price of death in order to satisfy the Father's justice, propitiating the Father. And then He was raised from the dead as the Father validated His sacrifice. He had to die, but He also had to live.

Righteousness

Second, notice Jesus said in John 17:4, "I glorified You on the earth." The Father affirmed that the Son had done just that when He spoke, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Jesus did nothing but glorify God on earth; He was holy, harmless, and undefiled. In John 17:19 we read, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself." That is a powerful statement regarding active righteousness. Jesus lived a perfect life in order for that full life to be credited to our account. He died a substitutionary death so that death could be credited to our account. This is the substitutionary work of Jesus Christ passively and actively.

Then in verse 12 He added, "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." While Jesus was on earth, He was living a perfectly

righteous life that would be credited to His followers. He was going to die a substitutionary death for sinners. And throughout that entire process, He was also protecting and securing His own.

Often we get the idea that because the Lord says we are secure and our salvation is forever, it just automatically happens. Yet there are divine means the Lord had for guarding His own while He was on earth. Because He sanctified Himself and lived a righteous life to be credited to the people whom God had chosen, because He died a substitutionary death and satisfied the justice of God in the place of sinners, He was given authority over all flesh to give eternal life. As Jesus said to the Father in John 17:3, “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

In summary, salvation is to know God, to know Christ. This knowledge comes from the theology revealed to us in His Word. May we once again be reminded that theology is not merely optional.

PRAYER

Lord, we are so blessed to have been able to reach down into this incredible portion of Scripture and pull up some of the richness in it. To look back at the cross and what Christ did and to contemplate the resurrection is a wonderful thing, but how much more exhilarating and comforting is it to know that this very moment He is alive at Your right hand, Father, praying us into heaven. What a sanctifying realization! Accomplish Your perfect purpose in every life, we pray, for the sake of our Savior. Amen.