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Safe Keeping

John 17:11-12; 15

Great pains have been taken to preserve the founding documents of our nation. In 1951 our constitution was carefully sealed between sheets of glass with copper and lead around the edges, and filled with helium gas. Over the years the glass showed signs of deterioration with too much humidity inside. After years of study, the document was removed from its encasement, and received careful restoration work. It is now encased in frames made of titanium and aluminum and filled with argon gas. It rests on a metal platform with a cushion of homemade paper. The paper releases or absorbs moisture in case of temperature or humidity changes inside the frame. Sapphire windows allow a light beam to travel below the surface, with an instrument measuring any changes in the humidity or oxygen level that might harm the parchment.

Could any of the Framers of the Constitution have ever imagined the steps that future caretakers would take--and the amazing space-age tools and technologies that would be brought to bear--to ensure the preservation of their words written on parchment in 1787?¹

The National Archives is entrusted with the safe-keeping of these documents. Our nation's love and reverence for them is demonstrated by the great pains that are taken with their safe-keeping.

In John 17 Jesus prays that God would take great-pains in the safe-keeping of those who follow Him. In His prayer Jesus shows great love for those whom the Father had given Him. Believers in Christ are His "prized possession" as they are given to Him by the Father (:6, 9, 12). He will shortly vividly demonstrate that great love by dying for their sin.

In this challenging world there may come times when we might doubt God's love for us. However in Jesus' prayer in John 17 we find great assurance. Assurance that God will keep us. Assurance that God will hear our prayers. And assurance that we will one day be with Christ.

Assurance that God Will Keep Us

¹¹ I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. 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.

¹⁵ I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.

Jesus is leaving His disciples in a world that hates them. He asks His Heavenly Father to **keep** them. This word has the idea of guarding, attending to carefully, and taking care of someone or something. For over three years Jesus had guarded, carefully attended to, and taken care of His disciples. Now He was leaving and so He asks the Father to continue their (and our) safe-keeping.

So we take great assurance that God will keep us, guard us, and protect us if we have believed in Christ. We actually find a specific example of this protection, even for one who dramatically failed Christ:

³¹ "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; ³² but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." ³³ But he said to Him, "Lord, with

*You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!"
34 And He said, "I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me." Luke 22:31-34*

Even though Peter failed and sinned so badly, Jesus assures him that God will keep him. What an encouragement and assurance for us!

God's safe-keeping is provided in two wonderful specific ways: answered prayer and one day bringing us to be with Christ.

Assurance that God Will Hear Our Prayers

As Jesus prays for us, we find assurance that God will answer our own prayers referring back to His promise in chapter 16:

23 In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. 24 Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

We learn from this prayer that it is when we pray as Christ did – seeking God's glory and His will – that God will answer our prayers. Are there times our prayers may not be answered? James tell us **"You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures"** (James 4:3). Let us make sure we are truly seeking God's glory and God's will as we pray and we have assurance that God will answer.

Assurance that We will One Day Be with Christ

24 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.

Jesus prays that we might one day be with Him in glory. This underscores the wonderful promise with which Jesus encouraged His disciples In John 14:

"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." John 14:1-3

What greater assurance and encouragement can we have in troubling and challenging times than that we will one day be with Christ and see and experience His glory.

Conclusion

Jesus shared the message of John 14-16 and this prayer in John 17 in order to encourage His disciples as He left them on this earth. He demonstrated how much He loved and treasured them – and us! He prayed for the Father to guard our safe-keeping. What great encouragement and assurance we can take from this prayer!

¹Ritzenthaler, Mary & Nicholson, Catherine. A New Era Begins for the Charters of Freedom. Prologue Magazine, Fall, 2003. <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2003/fall/charters-new-era.html>

BIBLE STUDIES

Thursdays, 12:00 Noon

TREASURER 'S CONFERENCE ROOM

(EB 54 – Basement East Wing)