

Sermons on John 17 ~ By Samuel Pierce ~ Sermon 21,

Joh 17:25

O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

Our most blessed Lord, in the course of this his prayer, uttered himself to his Father, on his own behalf, on the behalf of his eleven apostles, on the behalf of his churches, ministers, and people, down to his second coming again. He having prayed for a blessing on the preaching of his gospel, and prayed for all the elect, whether called or uncalled, draws night to close this his most important and all prevailing intercessory prayer. The present words, and those in the next verse, finishes all our Lord has to say at this time. It is indeed so complete, so comprehensive, that our Lord himself would add no more. He had spoken as the representative, head, and high priest of his people. He had expressed all the vast, and deep thoughts, counsels, will, covenant, purposes, and designs of his Father's heart towards the whole election of grace, respecting himself as the head, and the church his body. The longer he spoke, the more deeply he entered into the subject. He dwells with delight in what he is engaged on. It fills him with unspeakable joy to speak of his Father's ancient and everlasting love, to the elect, his beloved ones. Jesus values them most highly, because they were so dear and precious in the Father's view from everlasting. He urges it over and over, as a motive to engage his Father's heart perpetually towards them. When he prays for his whole church collectively, he is more brief, yet he is more full in depth of matter, and expression than before. So that the first part of this prayer, which was all for himself, which is contained in the five first verses, and the last part of this prayer, which is, as I conceive, contained in these three verses, the 21st, 22nd, 23rd, may well be compared together, as they carry this upon

the very face of them. That Christ, when praying for himself, and when praying for his whole church, for each and every individual thereof, was more deeply engaged, and more comprehensive, than in what I have styled the second part of this his prayer. As our Lord closed his request for himself, with, And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was; so he closes his prayer on the behalf of his whole church, with a demand on the behalf of his people. He speaks by way of authority, Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. I look on these words, as expressive of the utmost of Christ's will concerning his church. His will, and his Father's, is one and the same. Eternal glory is the gift of God. It is not the fruit of Messiah's death. It was before all worlds bestowed upon them in Christ. It is the fruit of everlasting love. It belongs unto them on the footing of their relation to the person of Christ. They were by the Father's everlasting love to their persons, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. They were married to Christ, and he and they were united and glorified together, in the transactions between the divine, coequal, coeternal, and coessential Three, before all time. They had glory in him, as well as grace, before time began. What our Jesus engaged to be, to do, and to suffer for them, did not unite him to them, or them to him. He was united unto them as their head, their father, their husband, from everlasting. And they were united to him as his members, as his children, as his spouse, from everlasting. What he undertook for them as surety and saviour, was the fruit and effect of this union between him and them. And his loving them, notwithstanding all their sinfulness, guilt, and misery, brought upon them by the fall, and his washing them from their sins in his own blood, is a proof of the immutable union of his person to theirs: and this was from eternity. The glory to which the elect are to be raised up unto, is a sight of Christ is his glory. He is God-man. His glory as such, is the very glory of the Godhead shining forth in him. This glory of his is incommunicable. He only can possess it.

Yet he will shine forth in the open sight, and vision of his person, before all his saints. They shall be where he is. They shall see his glory. This will be their ultimate blessedness. This will be their perfection of glory. Our Lord having expressed himself thus, before his Father, and in the hearing of his eleven apostles, he hereby admits his beloved ones into the utmost secrets of his love. He will glorify his members, as one with him their head. He will communicate glory unto them, he will put his own glory on them. They shall enjoy him, and rejoice in beholding his glory as their head, in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell. They shall behold him in all glory in his offices, and rejoice in his wearing the crown of salvation for ever and ever. But his personal glory, is infinitely beyond all this. Nor should it be confounded with it. And beholding Christ's personal glory, is the very essence of heavenly glory, blessedness, and perfection. The Father love Christ, God-man, before the foundation of the world. He loved him as the head of his church, before the foundation of the world. He loved him as Mediator, before the foundation of the world. As we are led by the Word and Spirit to take this into our minds, it leads us to high, adoring thought of our most precious Jesus. Our Lord's expressing himself thus, just as he was about to go forth to suffer and die for us, adds most important and inexpressible weight to all this. He says further on the behalf of his apostles present, O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them, and this he concludes. In which words, our Jesus speaks of the qualification of his eleven apostles for that glory. This was by the saving knowledge he had given them of the Father. This he illustrates by the ignorance of the world. He sets forth the original cause of it. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. He then proceeds to speak of the benefits he had bestowed on these elect persons, and which he would further bestow upon them. He declares

also his end and aim herein. Which was for the clear apprehension of the Father's love to their minds, and that he might dwell in their hearts. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast love me, may be in them, and I in them. I have thus given the connection and scope, meaning and design of both verses which remain to be sermonized. And shall begin with my present text, which is contained in these words, O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. I will aim to take them up, and open, and explain them, in the following method and order.

First, I will speak of the term and epithet, righteous Father, O righteous Father.

Secondly, concerning God's righteousness to the non-elect world, in leaving them in their sins and ignorance, and of his righteousness to the elect, in making himself known, and fulfilling his promises unto them.

Thirdly, that Christ had, and still doth, communicate saving knowledge to the elect. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

Fourthly, Christ having communicated the saving knowledge of the Father, to these eleven apostles, now present, they therefore owned and believed him to be the Mediator, and Saviour, though the world rejected him. Our Lord therefore suggests that on these accounts, they could not but be dear to the Father. Read the words, and you will see the truth of all this, O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

I am first to speak of the term and epithet righteous Father, O righteous Father.

Our Lord when he began his prayer, it was an address to the Father, and when he concluded it for himself, it was, O Father. As his prayer for his apostles, churches, ministers, and people, is so closely connected with his own, it may therefore be said to be carried throughout the whole prayer. Our Lord, as he proceeds in praying, uses the title of Holy Father. In the prayer which in a more especial manner belongs to his whole church throughout every succeeding period of time, down to his coming in his kingdom, and glory, he uses the term Father. When he expresses by way of demand and authority, that his whole church be admitted to a sight of him, in his personal glory, he uses the term Father. So he does in the words before us, and with an addition, it is here, O righteous Father. As our divine Jesus never used a word in prayer but with a peculiar design, so here Father, O Father, Holy Father, Father, O righteous Father, so often repeated, were most certainly designed for our instruction. To point out the relation Christ stands in to the Father, and also the relation the Father stands in, to us, in him. The title Holy Father is used most accurately, when our Lord is praying to the Father, for the preservation of the apostles in unblameable holiness, in their lives and conversations. The term Father, is used by our Lord, when his petition is for union which subsists between himself, and the saints in him, to the Father, that it might be made known, That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us., I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one. And when all Christ could utter, is to be spoken, concerning the glorification of his whole church, then it is used again, Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am; that they may behold my glory. And then, for the last time, it is in the words of my text, and with a fresh title. It is here, O righteous Father. It is here used as suited to what our Lord is speaking of. We should learn from hence, to address our heavenly Father, in his beloved Son, on the confidence of faith. To address

him under the consideration of such perfections and titles as are suited to what we are praying for. As it serves to keep up our expectation on him, and serves to increase our importunity that he will grant us the request of our lips. It would be blessed if we always prayed in the full faith and apprehension of Christ, as being our representative, priest, and intercessor. As our Lord is here speaking of the non-elect, whom he here mentions before the elect, and of the Father's providential dealings with them, so as that they were left to their natural ignorance of Christ, and unbelief of him, his truth, and gospel, he therefore in this his farther address to his Father, says, O righteous Father, thereby expressing himself, as well pleased with all divine dispensations. Not only with himself, and all his church, but with the non-elect also. The whole of his procedure concerning them, for his leaving out their names, and not writing in the book of life, with the whole of his vast ends and designs towards them, in the whole process of his providential dealings and dispensations, even to the shutting their eyes, and hardening their hearts, was all in very righteousness. O righteous Father! Thy conduct in shutting the eyes of some, and in opening the eyes of others, is all in perfect agreement with thine essential perfections. Thou art righteous in all thy ways, and holy in all thy works. I, who have been admitted into all thy counsels, and to whom thou hast made known all the mysteries of thy will, with all thy motives, holy ends, and purposes, must pronounce thee, righteous. Therefore, as I am about to speak concerning the unbelief and ignorance of the world, and how thou hast hid the things of the kingdom from the world, whilst thou hast revealed the same unto babes, I address thee with the title, O righteous Father, that I may set my seal to thy righteousness. Thou art essentially righteous, there is no unrighteousness with thee. Thou art in thy will, decrees, word, works, providence's, righteous, immutably, and invariably so; thou art so declaratively; thou art so manifestively; thou art so in thy works; thou art so in thy word; thou art so to thy saints; thou art so to thine enemies; thou art so in thy promises; thou art so in thy threatening's. O righteous Father, this title belongs unto thee, with this title I address thee, whilst I am

about to express before thee, the ignorance of the world concerning thee. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but these mine elect have known thee, and the original cause from whence their knowledge proceeds is from thyself. I am thy representative, he that hath seen thee, hath seen me, and he that hath seen me, hath seen thee. I have been in thy bosom, as God-man from everlasting. I have lived in thy presence as the Head, Mediator, and Saviour of thy church before the world was. I came forth from thee, by mission, and commission, to make thee known. Yet the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee. And I have publicly, fully, freely, and agreeable to all thy will, make known and published all thy will. yet, O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee. It was not thy good will and pleasure they should, and thou art perfectly righteous in all the acts of thy will, both in thine own eternal decrees, and in thine open conduct towards them, whereby they secret will concerning them is declared, O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. My knowledge of thee, is the original cause of their knowing me. And this is their qualification, and meetness for their enjoyment of all blessings of life everlasting. They have in consequence of their knowledge of me, owned and believed me to be sent of thee. In all this, thy righteousness and faithfulness to me, and them, is most clearly evidenced. I conceive my expressing myself as I have done, the best and clearest way of opening our Lord's words, and will now, looking to him for his continued grace to lead me on, proceed to my next head.

Secondly, to speak of God's righteousness to the non-elect world, in leaving them in their sins and ignorance. And his righteousness to the elect, in making himself known, and fulfilling his promises unto them, O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee.

Our Lord left out the whole non-elect world, in verse the ninth. Where he said to the Father, I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine. He prays for his elect

in the world, and for them all the while they shall continue in it, that the Father would keep them from the evil in it. From the evil men which are of it, and from the evil one, Satan, who is the god of it. He mentions the world in this prayer thus. That when the union of him, and his saints, and his Father, is completed, and fully manifested by the glory union breaking forth, at the second coming of him, and his nuptials between himself and bride are openly celebrated, the world may believe the Father hath sent him. Not believe on him for salvation, but believe him to be what he declared himself to be, and what the scriptures declares him to be, the Man in God, the only Mediator. And by the glory which will break forth upon the church at the second coming of the Lord Jesus, be convinced there hath been an union between Christ and his church from before all time, and been certainly evidenced throughout every generation of time, that it is very evident that the Father loved Christ, as the head of union, and the elect in him, with the same love wherewith he loved Christ, their head of union and communion with the Father, by the second coming of him, without sin unto salvation. Our Lord here speaks of the world again, and says, O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee. By the world here, is meant unbelievers. It may include and imply all the non-elect, because they will all be found in their sins, in their unregeneracy, in their unbelief and ignorance of Christ, down to the second appearing of the Lord. Now as there can be nothing in any part of God's dealings, and procedure with them, but what is perfectly just, so this present head of my discourse, is appropriated to speak concerning God's righteousness to the non-elect world, in leaving them in their sins and ignorance. And of his righteousness to the elect, in making himself known, and making good his promises unto them. And first, as it respects the non-elect, they never had any other relation to Christ, but as creatures. They were never in him as members in an head. They were never decreed to have any other being, but what they had by creation in Adam their natural head. This being, in all its perfection, with all creature good, they would have enjoyed, and that to the uttermost perfection of it, had they continued in the state

the Lord God placed them in by creation; they would not have wished to have been raised higher. Indeed it would have been sin in them if they had, as they were by creation left to the freedom of their wills, and they were all created in one man, so God's leaving them all to stand, or fall in him, was a most equitable and righteous act in God. The imputation of Adam's sin to them, and the consequence of Adam's fall, which is the deprivation of God's moral image which was stamped on the mind by God himself, in the day when they were created, was an act of righteousness in God. The disposing of them, with respect to every place, case, circumstance, and sin of their whole lives, is all in God, a righteous act. His sovereignty in wisdom, power, and providence towards them, is all righteous. His leaving them to their sins, let it be considered as it may, is only leaving every cause to produce its proper effect. His leaving them to their own wills, is no act of injustice. His leaving them to the natural blindness of their minds and hardness of their hearts cannot reflect dishonor, unrighteousness, and injustice on him. God's designs towards sinners, as well as towards saints, must be worthy of himself. It becomes us indeed, and well becomes us, not to be too scrupulously exact to pry into the hidden arcana of God, and ask, why did God permit sin to enter among the rational creatures? It must be resolved into divine sovereignty. Yet the reasons, the ends, and designs of God, in the permission of moral evil into the world, must be holy, and worthy of himself. Sin can have no more being or existence but in a rational creature. Its existence cannot be without God; yet sin is not of God as the author of it. Sin is the effect of the creature's mutability. Yet God cannot make a creature immutable. He can, if he pleases, continue a creature in a state of immutability. But this is, and must be, all of grace, and therefore it must for ever, and wholly depend upon the good pleasure of his will. as to the righteousness of God, in the permission of sin, it is hereby made manifest, the creatures mutability is such, he cannot continue in a state of purity and holiness, one single moment without super-creation grace. As it respects God's leaving the non-elect to perish in their sins, not the least injustice is done them in this. They have

but the experience of the fruits, and effects, of their total apostasy and fall from God, in their federal head Adam. As to such of them as seem to have the advantages of an external revelation of Christ, it only serves to prove how very far man is lost, that even what hath in appearance that which is revealing unto him, only serves through his own inherent sinfulness, to discover more and more what his heart is Godward. That he hates, and is averse to the method of God's salvation by Jesus Christ. As to such of the non-elect, as have the advantage of hearing the true and genuine gospel of the Lord and Saviour, and the Father's everlasting love as stated in the doctrine of it, and the Son's salvation, and the Spirit's testimony concerning the same, set forth, and yet never are they brought so far to the knowledge of the truth, as to have all their trust in Christ alone, it only serves to show that nature cannot get out of its own element. So, for some of the non-elect, so far as to have knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as hereby to escape the pollution which is in the world through lust, and yet some of these very persons to fall from all external acknowledgements, into worse sin than before, it only serves to show what their hearts were, and also that there is no cure for sin, and sinners, but in the free grace of God. And for God to leave some under the pure preaching of the gospel to commit the worst of sins, it all proclaims that the Lord is righteous and purity, holiness and truth itself. That he only is essentially, immutably holy. That it is his prerogative to be without variableness, and shadow of turning. If God leaves the non-elect to their sins and sinfulness, he does them no injustice. If he leaves them to their ignorance and unbelief, he only leaves them to themselves, so as that they are but what they were. Therefore, no injustice can be chargeable on God. Our Lord, therefore, whilst he is here speaking concerning the ignorance and unbelief of the world, O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, ascribes this to the righteousness of the divine nature. O righteous Father, this is righteous in thy sight. Thou hast not sent me to save all men. It is only for thine elect that I came into the world. They must have a supernatural birth; they must have a supernatural life. They must have supernatural faculties, or they

cannot believe on me. Thou hast not wrought, given, and bestowed such gifts and fruits of thy royal grace on the world, it is only unto thine elect these gifts belong. Thou art as righteous in thy dealings with the non-elect, as with thine own elect, as to the righteousness of thine acts; I therefore most fully resign up my will to thine, as I do most freely acknowledge thou art as righteous, in permitting some to stumble on me, the stumbling stone and rock of offense, as thou art in bringing others to believe on me to life everlasting. As I have aimed to declare God's righteousness to the non-elect world, in leaving them in their sins and ignorance, and I might add, in permitting them to perish to eternity; for if sin deserves damnation, it cannot be unjust in God to damn sinners for sin, and he damns none but for sin. Then as this very decree is founded on the holiness of his nature; (for God in no act can exercise his will contrary to the perfection of his nature, he being righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works); then as his righteousness in his threatening's must be displayed, so it must also be to the elect. Therefore, I go on.

Secondly, to speak of God's righteousness to the elect, in making himself known unto, and in his fulfilling his promises unto them: O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee.

As all the non-elect stood on a creation-bottom, and according to the covenant of works, were to be happy or miserable to all eternity, so all the elect were in Christ, and were to be dependent on him for all blessings and benefits of life everlasting to eternity. As one with Christ, he, on the foresight of the Fall, engaged to raise them up. It was decreed in the counsel and covenant of the Eternal Three, they should be all, each, and every one of them, redeemed, pardoned, justified, sanctified, and glorified. As we consider the elect standing in relation to God in Christ, we may behold the righteousness of God, that is, his faithfulness, exercised and engaged towards them. In redeeming them by the blood and death of his Son; in justifying them in his righteousness; in healing all their wounds by his stripes; in making them clean by the most precious blood shedding of his

Son; in working effectually on them, by the renewing's of his Holy Spirit; and in thus forming them and rendering them like unto Christ; in making them partaker's of a spiritual birth; in giving them spiritual faculties suited unto, and fitted for taking in spiritual objects, subjects, persons, and things; and thus leading them from the word, and by the teachings of God's Holy Spirit, to know and believe on Jesus to the saving of the soul. In all this the righteousness of God is manifested; hereby the faithfulness of God is displayed, as it also is in the fulfillment of all his promises to his beloved ones. Not that every promise he hath made is fulfilled to every individual soul belonging to the election of grace; no, it is impossible it should. But take the whole bulk and body of the elect, and all the promises are fulfilled, and that too in the largest and most comprehensive way and manner which they possibly can; all which is a proof of God's faithfulness. As Christ's coming into the world in the fullness of time and his dying for the ungodly, was a fruit and proof of God's love and faithfulness to his church, and people; so his quickening them, when dead in trespasses and sins, with spiritual, supernatural, and eternal life, is a full proof that he is righteousness itself: he will give full proof of this, in bringing home by his effectual grace all his elect to himself. Hence Peter says, speaking on this subject, The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but it long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 2Pe 3: 9. Now as the Father is faithful, in remembering his elect with everlasting kindness, our Lord might well address him with the title, O righteous Father! As he is pleased to bestow his Spirit on his people, and lead them in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake, he may be styled by our Lord, Righteous Father. As he makes known himself in a covenant way, and gives his Spirit, and sends him into the hearts of his people to cry, Father, Father! He most justly deserves to be entitled as our Lord doth, Righteous Father. As he fulfills his promises unto his people, in which he has caused them to hope, he is pleased herein and hereby to prove his righteousness and

faithfulness to his beloved ones. O righteous Father! The world hath not know thee!

Beloved, I do not conceive I have entered into this subject fully: indeed, I did not mean so to do; only to give some general hints, and then leave the same for the improvement of your minds. May the Holy Ghost follow what hath been delivered, so far as agreeable to the word, and so far as agreeable to your soul's good, and make it effectual to you! Do not you be afraid of any doctrine in God's book, neither of election and rejection: learn to receive them from God's own revealed account of them in his word, into your minds; pray the Holy Spirit to state them in your understandings, and to give you to feel the power of them in your hearts; and then to produce the fruits of these important and most momentous and solemn doctrines in your tempers, hearts, and lives. The true knowledge both of election to life, and predestination to death, will be very profitable to you, in your daily walk with God. May the Lord the Spirit prove the truth of this in your daily walk and warfare! I will proceed,

Thirdly, to observe, that Christ had, and still doth communicate saving knowledge to the elect: O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. In which words we have the original cause of the illumination of these elect apostles. There is a distinction made between them and the world: the world was in ignorance, these were not; the world knew not the Father, these did. O righteous Father, the world hath not know thee: yet I have preached in it; I have indeed preached to the men of it, in their hearing, and so as to come under their observation. I have preached the great things of thy kingdom, in the most plain and simple way and manner: I have illustrated it by very many outward and striking images in nature, yet they are just what they were; they are, and ever will remain, strangers to the mysteries of grace; yet I am in my person, and office, qualified to make sinners wise unto salvation. I have known thee: I know thee in all the riches of thy grace; I know thee in all the love of thine

heart; I have known thee, and my knowledge of thee is the original from whence these before thee have been brought to the true knowledge and understanding of thy personality, love, mercy, and truth: I, righteous Father, have known thee, and I have communicated the true knowledge of thee to these eleven men before thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. From these words some very important observations naturally arise; as that the original cause of all true knowledge is in himself, and cometh from him; he came from his Father's bosom, on purpose to make him known. He saith, Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. He then adds, Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. Joh 6: 45-46. He says also, I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me. Joh 14: 6. If all the true knowledge of God must come from Jesus Christ, then in the true knowledge of Jesus Christ, the true knowledge of God is contained. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the true illuminator of his church; he is the light of everlasting life; he is the bright and morning star; he is the sun of everlasting righteousness; he is the light of grace, and the light of glory; he is the day-spring from on high; he is the great Prophet over the house of God: none teacheth like him. As he was the original of communicating saving knowledge to the elect, and conveyed the first spiritual light, life, and knowledge that ever was in our world to Adam and Eve, immediately after the Fall; so he it was who communicated saving light, knowledge, and truth, concerning the Father, himself, and Spirit, to these his apostles; and he it is who still communicates saving knowledge to the elect. He speaks thus, from his church of old to us, on whom the ends of the world are come: Come ye near unto me, hear ye this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I, and now the Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me. Thus, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. Isa 48: 16-17. The Lord Jesus opens the eyes of the renewed mind; he lets in some bright beams of his own

heavenly light; he reflects the knowledge of his Father's everlasting love and mercy on our hearts; he communicates the saving knowledge of the Father, of himself, and of the Holy Spirit on us; hereby makes us acquainted with the deep things of God; he thus gives us to know the Lord; this leads us to make an acknowledgement of the divine persons in the Essence; hereby we are brought to know them in their covenant relation unto us; then we set forward in the way to heaven; we come up our of the wilderness leaning on the beloved; and all this, as being taught the true and saving knowledge of the Lord. I have known thee, says our divine Lord to the Father, the world doth not. I was not sent to teach them the saving truths and doctrines of thine everlasting gospel; when they have heard me, it hath been only with the outward ear; they have often stumbled at the word, they have often misinterpreted it; some of my sayings have been to them very obnoxious. The difference between what they know, from all they have heard, and what these my apostles here before thee know, shows the one are carnal, the other spiritual; and as it was then, so it is to the present day. Non but the elect are born again; therefore none but the elect so hear, as for their souls to live in consequence of what they hear; none but the elect receive spiritual truth, as spiritual truth, into their understandings; and really and truly to know the gospel spiritually, and to receive Christ by it into the understanding and into the heart, and to have the conscience purified by the blood of Jesus, and the affections fixed on the person and salvation of Jesus, is in my apprehension as great an evidence of eternal election as can be given, even from God himself. If the true knowledge of God was not of vast importance to the mind, our Lord would not so dwell upon it as he here doth; and if it be of eternal consequence even in the eye of Christ, then let us take heed of speaking in a way and manner so as to depreciate it. If this is the one thing which distinguishes the elect from the non-elect, then let us bless the Lord for any true knowledge any of us are favored with concerning the mysteries of grace. Some general truths concerning Christ and grace, lay open to all in the visible church of Christ; some special truths are only

opened to the elect. There are general truths in the gospel; there are peculiar truths in it, which cannot be rightly conceived of but by the Spirit. Take heed of resting upon a speculative knowledge of Christ; see that such truths as flesh and blood could never reveal nor relish, be such as your minds are taken with. Praise the Lord Jesus Christ for any truth concerning the Father's love, and of his person and finished work, which he hath taught you. Do not so much as strive after any truth in your own natural strength. Seek not to attain any true knowledge of Christ by human efforts; it will not profit you. Be content to receive your instruction from Christ, he only can teach you to profit; he layeth up sound wisdom for the upright; he is the fountain of wisdom. He, as Head and Mediator, receiveth all from his Father. He openeth the mysteries of grace to these apostles; and he still communicates saving knowledge to all his elect; to some more, to others less; to each as much as is needful. He withholds no needful knowledge from his saints; but is abundantly gracious to all his people, in giving them all things necessary to life and godliness; so that the apostle saith for himself and others, we have an unction from the Holy One: Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. 1Jo 2: 20. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. This our Lord speaks in commendation of his apostles; he speaks of them thus respectfully to his Father. It was designed to show his heart is so set on his beloved ones, that he cannot, he will not speak but with respect and favor concerning them, even before his Father. Oh, what a view does this give us of his unutterable grace! It rejoices his whole heart, and soul, to speak well of his people before the throne. He mentions none of their sins, but he commends their graces. He is most truly the antitypical Aaron who can speak well, and who does speak well of us before the throne of Majesty in the heavens. O righteous Father, the world hath not know thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. It was not in my mission to make thee savingly known unto the world. Thou art righteous in this thy concealment of the knowledge of thyself from them. Even the Jewish world, of whom I

came, and to whom I was sent, and among whom I have delivered my heavenly doctrine; these are, for the bulk and generality of them, shut up in unbelief; they have rejected every evidence given of me by the prophets, and in their prophecies. They have had some conviction, under the preaching and miracles I have delivered and wrought among them, that I am more than man, and greater than all before me; yet they have hardened their hearts; they are exactly as they were before described they should be by the prophet Esaias; it is therefore righteous in thee to leave them thus to the hardness of their hearts. Notwithstanding they know thee not, I do; I have known thee in all thy vast designs; I ascribe all righteousness and faithfulness unto thee. I have known thee, and these for whom I have been praying, and committing to thy care, have known that thou hast sent me; and I will go on to make thee further known unto them. And this brings me to my last particular head of discourse.

Fourthly, that Christ having communicated the saving knowledge of the Father to these eleven apostles now present, they therefore owned and believed him to be the Mediator, and Saviour, though the world rejected him. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

The knowledge Christ had of the Father, he communicated the same unto these eleven apostles; they, as they were elected from everlasting, so Christ had called them by his grace, and admitted them into his kingdom. They were born again of the Spirit, and had spiritual faculties suited to receive and apprehend the spiritual truths Christ had, and would further deliver unto them. Our Lord speaks these words with holy joy, I have known thee. He makes a great matter of it; he puts it by way of opposition of the ignorance of the world concerning the Father. As all Jehovah's dealings and dispensations are in uprightness, hence our Lord addresses the Father with this epithet, Righteous Father. He expresses the vehemency of his devotion, by introducing this with a note of

admiration, Oh! Righteous Father! He acknowledges the truth of things; so it is, the world hath not known thee. He uses the word but, by way of distinction, as it respected himself and his peculiar favorites, but I have known thee; this he lays a weight and emphasis upon. He then speaks of those who were now present, the eleven apostles, and these for whom I have been pouring out my whole soul in prayer for; on whom my heart is fixed, and for whom, and for all the rest of thine elect, I am going to be made sin, and sustain the curse, and for whom I have expressed my uttermost desire, and will to thee in prayer in their behalf. These my apostles have known that thou hast sent me; I would therefore express my joy in them; I would acknowledge thy goodness and faithfulness unto them. Thou hast made them acquainted with thy personality, will, counsel, covenant, and pleasure concerning me. I have been the instrument of opening they secrets unto them. I rejoice in what I have thus done for them. I have to speak on their behalf. These have known me to be the Son of the living God; they have known that I was sent by thee into the world, as the only Mediator; they have had, and they have received sufficient proof that thou didst send me; and it is by them the knowledge of thy love to the elect, and my work and office on the behalf of thine elect, is to be kept up, to be preached in the world, and kept and maintained amidst all the opposition of the world, down to the very end of time; for thy blessing will so accompany their ministry that their sound will go our into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. It gives me real pleasure, oh righteous Father, to mention them before thee; the frequent repetition of their persons in prayer is very sweet to me. I know the high valuation of their persons in thy sight; thou lovedst them before all time. When I think of thy love to them, as one with me, and the love thou bearest unto them for my sake, and the love thou wilt express unto them, as they shall bear their testimony for me, in their preaching, writings, lives, sufferings, martyrdoms, and deaths, this will be acceptable in thy sight; I therefore at this time mention it before thee. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. I

conceive I have expressed the substance of our Lord's meaning in these words; I think they are, with the following ones with which the chapter closes to the apostles: not so but that, as they are very expressive of our Lord's grace to them, so they may be conceived to belong to the whole church of God in her militant state, so far as they may with propriety be applied unto saints in various circumstances and conditions. It is, most undoubtedly, a good rule in interpreting scripture, to carry it so far as agreeable with its context, and the whole analogy of faith, to the utmost it will bear. Therefore, I would not exclude real saints from receiving benefits and blessings from every part of this prayer; yet I would not have the connection of it broken, nor would I wish the persons prayed for to be overlooked. Yet whilst I would for my own part be particularly attentive to this, I would allow, here is a spring of comfort opened in our text for all believers. It is from the doctrine of the holy apostles of the Lord and Saviour, we derive all true knowledge of Christ, and the Father in him, and this is by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; he it is who leads into all truth. Our Lord taught his apostles; they received all from him; he kept them whilst he was with them in the truth; he prayed his Father to keep them whilst he would be absent from them, by being received up into glory. The Father, in answer to his prayer, sent down the Holy Ghost upon them on the day of Pentecost; and thus, they being endued with power from on high, and being filled with the Holy Ghost, began their ministry after Christ's ascension into heaven; and the epistles wrote by some of them, and which contain the doctrine of them all, is continued, and will be continued down to the end of time, for the real benefit of the elect church and people of God. Therefore the words in my text may afford us real good; we may look at it thus: Christ in heaven received from his Father all he was to reveal and make known; he came down from the bosom of the Father and made it all known. The apostles were intrusted into the knowledge of all the mysteries of grace; their knowledge made way for their faith in Christ; they were fully satisfied concerning his mission; they received and embraced him as the one only Mediator between God

and man, the man Christ Jesus; they believed him to be the sent one of God. All this was by the secret power and influence of the Holy Ghost; for no man could then, any more than they can now, call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Yet Christ does not make express mention of him throughout this whole prayer; yet he had made frequent mention of him in his sermon, which went before this prayer, which should be considered; if it were, it would be sufficient to put a stop to a very great insult which is cast on some real saints; who, because they do not always expressly make mention of the Holy Spirit in preaching, in prayer, in conversation, are slandered, and that even by other saints, as if they were deniers of his work and operations, of his power and influences in the souls of such as are born again of God; no, beloved, the charge is not just. To say such, and such, deny the work of the Spirit of God, because in every sentence they do not expressly mention his name, work, and office. Our Lord does not mention him in all this prayer; yet as man, and as Mediator, as the Head of his body the church, he offered up this prayer to the Father through the influence and energy of the Holy Ghost; for we must not leave out the Holy Three in their covenant relation to the elect, in any one act of Christ as Mediator; and surely, this his prayer was no small part of his mediation. If our Lord speaks, as he doth in our text, by way of commendation, we see how well pleased he is with the exercise of faith on him, and on the Father as having sent him. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. As these words stand in connection with our Lord's demand, Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me, for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. They express wherein the meekness of saints for eternal glory, for the endless fruition, consists; it is in the knowledge of the Father's love, and the Son's mediatorial person, work, and office. He that believes in Christ hath everlasting life.

Oh, that the Holy Ghost may lead you more and more into the meaning of our Lord Jesus Christ, in and throughout this 17th of John! It will then be unto you as the holiest of all. If you converse with Christ in reading this chapter, and taking in his truths uttered by himself into your minds, you will find yourselves in the very portals of heaven. Whilst I can add no more, I do not mean no more can be added; no, far from it: I conceive every part of what I have expressed is very short, as it respects what is contained in the words of Christ. All I can therefore say, it is out of my weakness I have attempted to say anything. May God command his blessing on his own truth! Amen.