

The body of sin was nailed to the cross with Christ. There the heart-strings of our every lust was cracked; so that the death of Christ is our security against the damning guilt of sin, and also against the reigning power of sin. For thus it is written, *Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.* May the Lord, the Spirit, help us to view, and review, over and over again and again, our complete redemption through the blood of Christ. May the Holy Ghost give us more and more to study our complete sanctification in Christ. May he lead us to apprehend how completely all our sins, inward and outward, are abolished out of the sight of God our heavenly Father, by the obedience and sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. So far as we have the real scriptural knowledge of these important truths, so far we shall believe in Christ, who is truth itself. And in our real believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall have actual fellowship with him. And in real fellowship with Jesus consists the very life of gospel sanctification. And when we live in communion with Jesus, we cannot but die to sin, and live unto God. May the Lord Jesus prove the truth of this, by putting forth the virtue and efficacy of his blood and death continually within us. As this is the last words in our Lord's prayer, as they particularly belong to his apostles, so they are very important ones, therefore I will again repeat them. *As thou hast sent me into the world, so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.* It would be well for ministers, churches, saints, and every individual believer,

to be daily engaged in reading this seventeenth chapter of *John*. It would be well with us all, were we gaining daily a greater knowledge of Christ by it. Hereby we should be led to prize our Lord more and more, for the exceeding riches of his grace. We now close the second part of our Lord's prayer. May our Lord pardon freely and fully all defects. For sure I am, I think, were a man to write on this most divine chapter ever so clearly, he would, notwithstanding that, see such depths of glory and majesty in it, as would give him to conceive he himself was but on the bare surface of it. I think so for myself, and of my performance. Not that I am conscious of any deficiency in the truth of what is written; no, God forbid. I would not permit it to see light, had I the least cause for thinking so. I am persuaded of the truth of what is written; but am fully persuaded the depth of truth is not fully explored; neither can it be. May the Lord make use of what I have written as seems good in his sight. To him I commit it; may he graciously accept it, and so shine on the truths opened, as to convey life and light to the understanding, and joy to the heart. As the heart of Christ is opened in the chapter, and even heaven too, and the heart of Christ, as we may so say, as it is in glory, is here set before us, may the Holy Spirit so bless us with spiritual views hereof, as may fill us with all joy and peace in believing. Amen.

## SERMON XVII.

JOHN XVII. 20, 21.

*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*

**WE** here begin the third part of our Lord's prayer; in which he prays for his whole church. In the first part of it, which begins with the first and ends with the fifth verse, our Lord prays for himself. In the second part of this most truly excellent and sublime supplication, which begins at the sixth and ends with the nineteenth verse, he prays for his apostles. In the third part, which begins with the twentieth and ends with the twenty-sixth verse, which closes the chapter, he prays for all his church down to the very end of time. This hath been, by some, styled Christ's Catholic prayer. I have in the former sermons frequently intimated, that whilst in the second part of this prayer, the eleven apostles were most peculiarly interested in what our Lord there says, in the pleas he makes, in the arguments which he urges, in the petitions which he offers; yet not so, but his church and people are more or less to be considered as having some share in it. So I would say respecting this third part of it, we are not here so to look on this part of the prayer,

as so belonging to the church and people of God as not to extend its influence unto them also. No; so far from it, that it may be safely said, it is a prayer for a blessing on their apostolic labours. That their preaching might be crowned with an everlasting blessing; that the elect might enjoy the fruits of it; and through their ministerial labours, recorded in the word, and by means of their writings, such as are purely canonical scripture, they might be so enlightened as to take into their minds all those great, essential, and important truths which constitute the being and well-being of all true spirituality and heavenly mindedness in their regenerated minds. So as hereby the original, and consummation of the grace of God, in all the acts of the divine will, in all Jehovah's great ends and designs, would hereby be so far made known unto them, as would lead them to centre in him, and give him glorious praise. I conceive this is a very genuine interpretation of these words. *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*

I am fully persuaded there are very great depths to wade through, in the remainder of this prayer. I most sincerely desire to be guided through them, so as not to make any mistake concerning truth. I cannot but beseech the Lord, the Spirit, to be my teacher. I would implore him to open these further mysteries of grace unto me, and get to himself a glorious name, by enabling me so to express myself

on the remaining part of this prayer, as may be beneficial to the Lord's people.

I will endeavour to cast what I have to say, with a design to unfold and explain myself on the present text, into the following method and order :

First, By considering the subject of this part of our Lord's prayer before us, or the persons for whom he here prays—it is for his whole church ; and the means whereby they were to be brought to believe—it was through the preaching of the apostles. *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.*

Secondly, I will take a view of the person who here prays ; of his office ; of his concern for his church. It is Christ is the person who prays. He prays as the Great Head, Saviour, and High-Priest of his church and people.

Thirdly, What our Lord prays for—it is for union ; which he thus expresses and explains. *That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.*

Fourthly, The end mentioned by our Lord concerning this union of real saints to himself. *That the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*

As through the good hand of my God upon me, I may be enabled to go through these particulars, and fill up these heads and divisions before us, the whole of the subject will be recited to you. May the Lord accompany it with his presence and blessing. Amen.

I am, First, To consider the subject of this part of our Lord's prayer, or the persons for whom he prays—it is for his whole church. He says, *Neither*

*pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.*

If we take a cursory review of the whole of this prayer, we find how Christ the Son of God, who lay in his Father's bosom from everlasting, recites those transactions, which were between the Father and himself before the world was. This will appear if you read the fifth verse. *And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.* And ver. 24, *Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.* Our Lord, ver. 6, speaks of election as the highest act of God's grace to us. *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.* How did these become the Lord's? It was by election. Thereby it is we first became his. *Thine they were, and thou gavest them me.* This is repeated, ver. 9, 11, 12, 24. As here expressed, it is to be understood of God's giving them at effectual calling, and in that sense was true of these apostles. But that is not all, there is a double giving of the elect to Christ; one at our calling, another at, and in election. The giving the elect to Christ was a different act, a distinct act from that of election, though done at election. The elect were first the Father's by election, who singled forth the persons, and then gave them to Christ upon his electing of them, and so they are here joined together, *thine they were, and thou gavest them me.* They were *first thine by election; then given unto me.* In the same way and sense, that *grace is said to be given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.*

2 Tim. i. 9. Christ pleads the Father's act of election, and his giving the elect to him, and hereby he expresses that the supreme end of election, as it respects us, is God's choosing us to himself, to a supernatural union with himself, and to a supernatural communion with himself, and a supernatural communication of himself, in grace, blessedness, and glory. Our union with God the Father, and with Christ, is the utmost end of our election. These words are full proofs of it. Christ prays on the behalf of his whole church, *That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they all may be one in us*, ver. 21. And again, ver. 23, *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one*. God's motive within himself for all this, was to manifest and illustrate his grace and mercy to the elect sons of men. The subject matter of Christ's prayer in this third part of it, is for union amongst his saints, and for their knowledge of their union to the Father and himself. He prays for glory, and spends the rest of his most heavenly prayer in explaining what were intended by the expressions, and his using such arguments with his Father as would be all-prevailing. This is the substance of this last part of our Lord's prayer. He began for himself, ver. 1, with *Father*, and uses it once more in his prayer for himself, saying, *And now, O Father*, ver. 5. In this prayer for the eleven apostles he says, *Holy Father*, ver. 11. In his prayer for his whole church he uses the term, *Father*, twice; and *Righteous Father*, ver. 21, 24, 25. In what our Lord says, in every verse which yet remains to be explained, he opens his very heart, and his Father's

also; so that when the Holy Ghost is pleased to open and explain our Lord's words unto us, we cannot but be inflamed with love to him. The persons for whom our Lord here prays for, are all, and each individual which compose his church, consisting of the election of grace, who were infinitely more dear to him, as collectively considered, than those eleven persons on whom he had bestowed so long a part of his prayer. It must be so; for whilst Christ loves all the elect with one and the same invariable love; yet the whole must have a greater share of love than any individuals can. Not but each individual is as fully interested in him, and as truly united unto him, as the whole collected body of his mystic members are. It is very good to be interested in Christ's prayers, intercession, and advocacy. It is very good to read the heart of Christ, as it is here expressed. We cannot at any time be better employed than in mixing faith with our Lord's words. It is thereby we receive into our minds the benefit of his divine supplication. It is good to view Christ praying for us, as the elect of God. To view ourselves to be amongst the number of those whom the Father gave unto him before the world began. It is very good to be exercising our minds on the pleas, and arguments which Christ uses throughout this prayer. To observe the petitions which he puts up in it. It is very needful to look over closely and attentively, on the fervency and intensity of Christ in his prayer, and especially in this last and latter part of it. And how he reserves the highest blessings for the close of it. Which shews how our Jesus, the more he

thinks, and exercises himself on our behalf, the more his heart is drawn out towards us. When we are led by the Holy Spirit thus to apprehend the subject, we are most effectually fixed on it, so as to worship our Lord with the utmost confidence of our minds. And when the spiritual mind is thus engaged with Christ, and properly exercised on him, all his well. In this our Lord's last prayer, offered immediately before he went forth to lay down his life for the many which the Father gave him, you have him, ver. 6, declaring to his Father the conversion of the eleven apostles. *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.* Ver. 8. *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.* He then commits them to the care of his Father, saying, ver. 11, *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.* Ver. 12. *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.* At ver. 15, he says, I pray that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. At this 20th verse, which is our present text, he says, *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, which so knits all going before, concerning keeping the saints in the*

faith, fear, and obedience of God's elect, as must consequently belong to each, and every individual of them. This prayer being offered up for the whole church who were to come, must be founded, as our Lord's prayer was for the apostles, on the foundation of eternal election. It was a prayer for millions of the uncalled elect. Yet they had been all given by the Father unto Christ, and therefore they were, and had been from everlasting dear and precious unto him. In the 2nd verse of this chapter, our Lord says to his Father, concerning himself as God-man Mediator, *As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.* This *as many*, are as many as he had amongst all mankind, in all ages, and of all, and every one of these *many*, he says, they had been *given him by the Father*, at which time, and thus when mentioned, was before many of them, yea, most of them were born, in all ages to come. For they are all that *many*, whom he died for, and prayed for accordingly. All which is confirmed by these words, *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.* And this prayer on their behalf, laid the foundation of their future conversion. If Christ therefore prayed for the elect before their conversion, we should likewise do so. We should intreat our Lord to remember and bless those he died for; and in his own time and way, to make them evident by effectual calling. As our Lord prayed for his whole church, as the elect of God, as the beloved of God, as those the Father gave him, and for whom he was about to die in their

room and stead, so he hereby expresses his infinite delight in them, and thus he lays a foundation for their minds to be exercised on these most divine and heavenly subjects. As I have gone through the first part of the division of these words, *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word*: so I come to speak of the means whereby they were to be brought to believe. It was through their word; that is, through the ministry and writings of the apostles. The apostles were to preach the word of faith. The elect were to hear it. The Holy Ghost would give them so to hear it, as to receive it. And thus lead them to believe on Christ through the word. Which was to be the power of God unto salvation. The gospel is the means in the hands of the Holy Spirit, whereby the elect are enabled to believe on Christ to the saving of their souls. The gospel was purely delivered by the apostles, exactly as they themselves had received it from their Lord himself. The Holy Ghost was eminently with them, and as they preached it, the Holy Ghost revealed Christ by it, and thus by this means as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. As our Lord makes mention of the means whereby the elect would be brought to believe, so he prays for a blessing on the apostles, and their preaching in these words. And this prayer of Christ is effectual to the present moment. The doctrine in the word, and ministry of Christ's servants, though very inferior to theirs, is still efficacious. It is still the means of producing, maintaining, increasing, and confirming faith. And the ministers of Christ now, and to the end of the

world, may from hence be fully assured their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. And churches, and all saints, should remember it to be an unspeakable blessing to be under the preaching of the everlasting gospel, which Christ himself hath been pleased to appoint, as the means of working faith in their souls, and of carrying it on with power, and on which as a divine ordinance he has prayed, and also for his people, as they are under it. Therefore they may well expect his blessing when they seek his face, and unite in church fellowship, and read, and hear his word. It is as thus engaged, the Lord commandeth the blessing, life for evermore. But I will proceed,

Secondly, To take a view of our Lord Jesus, the person who here prays. Of his office; of his concern for his church. It is Christ is the person who prays. He prays as the great Head, Saviour, High Priest of his church and people.

He who prays is personally and essentially *the only begotten Son of God*. Yet he does not pray as the only begotten Son of God. As such he could not; he being possessed of all essential perfections and blessedness equal with the Father and the Spirit, in the same infinite and incomprehensible essence. But he here prays as God-man, and as agreeable to his office, and the relation which he stood in to his church and people. He was the head of his body the church. All the concerns of it were before him. All the grace which was to be imparted to his people, was contained in his fulness. He was deeply interested in them, and in all which he prayed for them. They were as dear to him as his own

soul. He valued them above, and beyond his own life. He was about most freely to give full proof of it. He was just going forth to give his life a ransom for them, and to give up his all to do them good. He prays therefore agreeable to the relation in which he stood to his people. He was their head, he felt for them. The members of the natural body do not feel for the head, nor think for the head, nor add any thing to the head. So neither do believers add any thing to Christ. They do not think for Christ, they do not feel for him. No, but he as their head adds all to them. They receive their all from him; he it is who thinks for them; he feels for them; he communicates unto them. As their head and representative he here prays for them; he is their Saviour. As such he here prays on their behalf, and consecrates his whole person, by his prayers for them, to be their willing sacrifice. He prays as their great High Priest; as having all their names written on his heart. As burning in love and affection unto them. He prays agreeable to his office, which was that of a priest, of high priest, as such he prays for his beloved ones, and appears in the Father's presence on their behalf, he being just about to make his soul an offering for sin. What must the prevalency, virtue, and efficacy of his prayer be, when we consider the dignity of his person! he was equal with the Father in all essential perfections and blessedness. He was God and man in one person; he was the fellow of the Lord of Hosts. He was the image of the invisible God. He was the head of the whole election of grace. He was the great high

priest of his church. And he here prayeth for all his people, according to his relation which he stood in to each and every one of them, and agreeable to his office in which he was engaged for them. It is a great subject which is now before us. It is a great sight of Christ, which we have now in view. A spiritual apprehension hereof, cannot but feed and feast our minds with unspeakable delight. It is one of the greatest views of Christ, in the exercise of his priesthood, as he carries it on in the highest heavens, which is given us of, in the word. Here we may look, and fall down with holy wonder and surprise before him. It is here we may observe how fully Christ exercises himself, on the behalf of his whole church. None of his beloved ones are left out; every individual of them is included and comprehended. They are all had by him in everlasting remembrance. Not one of them but are everlastingly dear, and precious in his view. He cannot forget them. No, he cannot. Let their cases, frames, circumstances, trials, temptations, sorrows, and miseries be what they may, they are all before him. He is here praying for his people on earth. The efficacy of it, like his atonement, lasts always. It is as immutable as himself. This prayer was the act of his own mind. It is therefore eternal, and eternally efficacious, as with him *there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*. It comprehends and reaches unto all the spiritual concerns of his people. It is sufficient to yield them consolation, yea, everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace. It would be well with us, were we to be making daily use of it, by reading it, and mixing

faith with it, and thus at all times be drawing confidence, and deriving increasing strength from our Lord Jesus Christ through it. We all conceive, if we could be fully persuaded our Lord Jesus Christ had nothing in his heart against us, we should then have no cause for the least unbelief. Yet were we to read this chapter in faith, it would be impossible for us to conceive an hard thought of him. Indeed it would; because were we led by the Holy Spirit, to view and know the heart of Christ, as it is here set open to us, we should clearly perceive our blessed Lord cannot give us greater evidence of his love than he here doth. As our most precious Christ, shines forth all in flames of love, in his offering up this prayer, so we may perceive, the longer he is in his prayer, the more importunate he is. He prays as though he were in heaven. He prays thus on earth, that we might never be at a loss to know what his heart is towards us in heaven. It was the greatest prayer our Lord ever offered. His whole soul was in it, as truly as in his offering himself to take away sin. The high priest under the law was to have on all his sacerdotal robes, and together with the holy crown on his forehead, and the breast-plate, on which were all the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel inscribed, this was to be on his heart. The Lord's commandment was, that he should not appear without them in his worship. *And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel, in the breast-plate of judgment, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually.* See Exodus xxviii. 29. *And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon*

*it like the engravings of a signet, holiness to the Lord. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts, and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord.* See verses 36 and 38, of the forecited chapter. We have our great High Priest, the antitypical Aaron, in all his glorious robes of holiness, righteousness, purity, and perfection, presenting himself in the presence of God for us. The Father accepts him, and he sees us in him, and accepts us in him. Christ's acceptance is our acceptance. We are accepted in the beloved. On his heart, as the true High Priest, our names are all inscribed. The Father beholds us in Christ; we shine in him; he hath set us, as so many seals on his heart. And like as when on the day of atonement, the high priest went into the holy place with a censer *of burning coals of fire, taken from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and brought it within the vail.* And was commanded to *put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense might cover the mercy-seat.* See Lev. xvi. 12, 13. So our Lord, as the antitype of all this, offers up himself, in this intercessory prayer, on the behalf of his whole church, upon the foundation of the offering of his whole person, God-man, in the flames of everlasting love. Oh! that we might get warmth by believing apprehensions of the truth hereof. May the Lord the Spirit, create in our minds, some blessed conceptions of the subject before us. Then our hearts will be warmed, and

our mouths will be opened to praise him with joyful lips. Let us view Christ as our holiness, as our righteousness, as our perfection, as our purity, as our representative, as our great high priest, as our Saviour, as our head. Let us believe him to be all this unto us, then we shall take great delight to have fellowship with him. We shall love to be in his company; we shall delight ourselves in him. It will be a feast to us to be viewing him by faith in the glass of his holy word. To be looking into his heart; to be viewing ourselves in him. We shall then be frequently entering by faith into the holiest of all, to converse with him. But I will proceed to my next head of discourse.

Thirdly, To inquire what it is our Lord in the words of our text prays for, *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. That they all may be one.* It is for union, which he thus expresses and explains, *That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.*

There is an union of saints, as saints, which consists in their being of one heart and of one soul. In their being partakers of the same new, heavenly, and spiritual birth. Of their being partakers of the same heavenly calling. They are partakers of like precious faith. Therefore it becomes them to keep *the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace.* The apostle says, *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6. Oneness of faith makes way

for oneness of judgment, and oneness of judgment in the truths, doctrines, and ordinances of the everlasting gospel, makes way for an union amongst the saints and people of the Most High. And this was so eminently the case at, and after the day of Pentecost, that it is said, *And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul.* Acts iv. 32. How should it be otherwise? seeing *they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.* Acts ii. 42. Surely this was the effect of this part of our Lord's prayer in a measure. There can be no communion without an union; and all saints have union to Christ. From him they receive their all; he being their head, and they being in him, members of him, so they are hereby also united to each other, as members in the same living head, and as being all one in him. Union makes way for communion; without it there can be none. In the scriptures we read of the following most truly divine and mysterious union, and they are resemblances of each other, and are so connected as to be founded on each other. The first, is that which exists in the incomprehensible Essence, of an union of three coequal and coeternal Persons, who are personally distinct, yet coessentially one, in the self-existing Essence. *The Lord our God is one Lord, or, the Lord our Alehim is one Jehovah.* See Deut. vi. 4. This is an union incomprehensible. We have nothing to do with it, but to believe it, on the ground and footing of divine revelation. The next great union founded on this essential one, is the union of our nature, to the second Person, in Jehovah.