

John 17:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Christ's Protective Ministry: This verse comes from Jesus' High Priestly Prayer (John 17), offered the night before His crucifixion. The phrase "while I was with them in the world" (hote ēmēn met' autōn en tō kosmō, ὅτε ἦμην μετ' αὐτῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ) speaks of Jesus' earthly ministry drawing to a close. He reflects on His faithful preservation of the disciples the Father gave Him. "I kept them in thy name" (egō etēroun autous en tō onomati sou, ἐγὼ ἐτήρουν αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί σου) uses the imperfect tense, indicating continuous, ongoing protection throughout His ministry.

The Preserving Power of God's Name: The phrase "in thy name" emphasizes that Jesus guarded the disciples through the Father's revealed character and authority, not by human strength. "Those that thou gavest me I have kept" (hous dedōkas moi ephylaxa, οὓς δέδωκάς μοι ἐφύλαξα) testifies to perfect shepherding—not one was lost. The verb "kept" (ephylaxa, ἐφύλαξα) means "guarded," "watched over," or "protected," suggesting vigilant care against spiritual dangers.

The Exception: Judas, Son of Perdition: "None of them is lost, but the son of perdition" introduces the tragic exception—Judas Iscariot. "Son of perdition" (ho huios tēs apōleias, ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας) is a Hebrew idiom meaning one destined for or characterized by destruction. Strikingly, the same phrase describes the Antichrist in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. "That the scripture might be fulfilled" (hina hē

graphē plérōthē, ὅνα ἡ γραφὴ πληρωθῆ) references Psalm 41:9 ("Mine own familiar friend... hath lifted up his heel against me") and Psalm 109:8 (applied to Judas in Acts 1:20). This demonstrates that even Judas's betrayal occurred within God's sovereign plan, fulfilling prophecy while not excusing Judas's personal responsibility (Matthew 26:24: "woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed!").

The Doctrine of Perseverance: This verse powerfully supports the biblical doctrine that those truly given by the Father to the Son will be kept secure. Jesus lost none except the one who was never genuinely His. This foreshadows His promise in John 10:28-29 that no one can snatch believers from His or the Father's hand.

Historical Context

This prayer occurred in the Upper Room or on the way to Gethsemane (John 14:31, 18:1) on Thursday evening before Jesus' Friday crucifixion, approximately AD 30-33. Jesus had just celebrated the Last Supper and instituted the Lord's Supper (John 13). He spent these final hours preparing His disciples for His imminent departure, promising the Holy Spirit's coming (John 14-16) and praying for their protection and unity (John 17).

The reference to Judas as "son of perdition" and the fulfillment of Scripture points to several Old Testament prophecies. Psalm 41:9 described betrayal by a trusted friend, written by David but finding ultimate fulfillment in Christ's experience. Psalm 109, a messianic imprecation psalm, was applied to Judas by the apostles when selecting his replacement (Acts 1:15-20). Zechariah 11:12-13 prophesied the thirty pieces of silver, the price of betrayal.

Early church fathers including Augustine, Chrysostom, and Athanasius referenced this verse when developing doctrines of election, perseverance, and apostasy. They noted that Judas was never truly regenerate despite his outward association with Christ. Jesus called him "a devil" from the beginning (John 6:70-71) and knew who would betray Him (John 13:11). This challenges superficial faith and warns that mere proximity to Christ and His people doesn't guarantee salvation. Genuine

disciples persevere because Christ keeps them; false professors eventually depart because they were never truly His (1 John 2:19).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What comfort does Jesus' perfect preservation of His true disciples provide for believers facing spiritual warfare and temptation?
2. How does Judas's example demonstrate that external religious activity and proximity to Christ don't guarantee genuine salvation?
3. What is the relationship between divine sovereignty (God giving disciples to Christ, predestining events) and human responsibility (Judas's culpability for betrayal)?
4. How does Jesus' role as protector and keeper of His people inform our understanding of eternal security and perseverance of the saints?
5. In what ways should knowing that even betrayal fulfilled Scripture shape our perspective on suffering, evil, and God's sovereign plan?

Interlinear Text

ὅτε ἦμην μετ' αὐτῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, ἐγὼ ἐτήρουν
While **I was** **with** **them** **in** **G3588** **the world** **I** **kept**
G3753 G2252 G3326 G846 G1722 G2889 G1473 G5083

αὐτῶν ἐν τῷ ὄνοματί σου οὓς δέδωκάς μοι
them **in** **G3588** **name** **thy** **G3739** **that thou gavest** **me**
G846 G1722 G3686 G4675 G1325 G3427

ἐφύλαξα καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐξ αὐτῶν ἀπώλετο εἰ μὴ ὁ
I have kept **and** **none** **of** **them** **is lost** **G1487** **G3361** **G3588**
G5442 G2532 G3762 G1537 G846 G622

νιὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας ἵνα ἡ γραφὴ πληρωθῇ
the son **G3588** **of perdition** **that** **G3588** **the scripture** **might be fulfilled**
G5207 G684 G2443 G1124 G4137

Additional Cross-References

John 18:9 (Parallel theme): That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.

John 13:18 (Word): I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.

John 6:37 (Parallel theme): All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

1 John 2:19 (Parallel theme): They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

Acts 1:25 (Parallel theme): That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

2 Thessalonians 2:3 (Parallel theme): Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

