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# Praying for His Own

## John 17:6-19

*Russ Kennedy*

Some things that the Bible teaches and that Christians believe sound odd to those who are not familiar with the Bible. We are going to bump up against that today. In the center section of Jesus' prayer is some truth that is different, difficult and delightful.

So, let's get our map out and locate ourselves in the landscape of this text.

In the first section, Jesus prays about Himself and His Father (v.1-5). The focus is on the glory that Jesus shared with the Father and was given Him by the Father. He requests that this glory may be made public through His completed work on the cross.

In the section we are in today, Jesus prays about Himself and His disciples (v.6-19) His focus is on the words they have heard and the Word they will receive all as the truth that they need. He requests that His Father preserve and protect the disciples through the Word.

In the last section Jesus prays for all believers (v.20-26). His focus is on the unity of believers that flows out of the unity of the Godhead. He requests that His people maintain the unity that actually exists in their union with Christ.

What is shaping this section of the prayer? Jesus is...

Praying for the disciples...

Praying in view of their future ministry...

Praying as one who is leaving them in the world...

## **As Ones who are the Gift of the Father (v.6-10)**

Jesus prays for His own as those who are the gift from His Father.

<sup>6</sup> “I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. <sup>7</sup> Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. <sup>8</sup> For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. <sup>9</sup> I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. <sup>10</sup> All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.

### **Jesus showed them God’s Character (v. 6)**

His disciples know what God is like. They have not only read it in the Scriptures they had, but they had seen it lived out day by day in the midst of the mess. They saw the character of God (His Name) in daily conduct. This connection of the Scripture to personal engagement with Jesus powerfully affects our author, John. His first epistle starts with these words: *1 John 1:1-4*

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

John understands that Jesus lived for the sake of our union, communion and joy.

### **They were given to Jesus (v.6)**

The disciples were chosen by the Father. They were selected out of the world. They were given to Jesus. How do we know that? Just because Jesus says so? Yes, but that gift is also a grace. God’s gift of the disciples to Jesus results in their keeping His word. They have prized, protected and performed the Word they had received.

### **Jesus gave them the Word (v.7-8)**

They kept the Father’s Word that Jesus had given them. They had received it from the Lord. Hearing the teaching Jesus gave brought belief in Jesus Himself. They just didn’t have faith in faith. Nor did they simply believe a set of statements. They believed the words, the teaching, in such a way that they moved in trust, love and obedience toward Jesus. They received His words and thus began to receive Him.

### **Jesus prayed exclusively for them (v.9-10)**

Mark this well. There is an exclusivity to Jesus’ praying. He does not intercede for everyone. He says so expressly here. He does not pray for the world. He prays for those given him by the Father. He prays first for these disciples but also for all who are Father-given, truth-hearing and Son-receiving.

Stop and think about this for a moment. Jesus has come and lived among us. There were eyewitnesses to who He was, how He lived and what He did and said. Those eyewitnesses, the disciples, were chosen by God. They were taught by Christ. They received His Words in such a way that they received Him. They were prayed for by Christ. They are our link to Him. For the Word they heard, the Word they received, the Word they believed is the Word they have given us. They spoke it, taught it and wrote it. Now we have it. It is called, the New Testament.

Like them, if you hear, receive, believe and keep His Word, you have been chosen, given, graced and interceded for.

### **As Ones who are Guarded by the Father (v.11-15)**

Jesus also prays for His own as those who are guarded by the Father.

<sup>11</sup> And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. <sup>12</sup> While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. <sup>13</sup> But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. <sup>14</sup> I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>15</sup> I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

Jesus is about to leave them. They are going to face severe trials, tribulations and temptations. They will not have the immediate presence, power and protection of Christ. So He prays for them. The answer to His prayer will be the Holy Spirit.

### **The dangers they face (v.11-12)**

In the Lord's pending absence what are the dangers they will face?

- That they will not remain in God's name... The word here "keep" means to sustain in a state of being. It is as though He said, "In your name, keep them." They will be tempted to not stay in and thus not live out the name of the Father. It is a danger of character.
- That they will be fall away from following Christ... Jesus had guarded His own so that they would not be lost. One of His disciples was lost. Judas Iscariot betrayed Him and never repented. He simply killed himself. But this was within the plan of God. This was prophesied by the Scriptures. The loss of this one does not challenge the ability of God or the answer to this prayer.

The purpose for remaining in the Father's name is to express the union between the Father and His people. Our union with Christ and the Father places us in the sphere of God's character. If we do not reflect that character, then we are likely not united to Him. This oneness then is experienced and expressed in being like our God. We are not like Him in essence. We do not become gods. We are like Him in character. In Bible thinking, there is no division between what one is and what one does.

So one of the gravest dangers a disciple may face is not living out the character of the Father and so demonstrate that he is not one with the Father.

### **The results they will experience (v.13-14)**

Why does Jesus pray that they will be guarded in the world? The results of their being kept provide a startling and possibly, bewildering contrast.

They will have the fullness of Jesus' joy in them. One of *the great purposes* in union and communion with the Father is to share in His joy. We do not receive the joy of God in a bucket but rather through a pipe. Joy only comes by being connected to Him.

They will have the fullness of the world's hatred against them. One of the hard products of union and communion with the Father is the hatred of world. Their no longer being of the world, their now being of the Father and heaven fuels the loathing of the world.

But we are often so uncomfortable with this contrast. We want both the joy of the Lord and the approval of the world. We want to have both heaven and earth smiling at us. I doubt this is even possible. Jesus does not pray that the world learn to love us. The Lord prays that we will have the Lord's joy even in the midst of the sure and certain and often painful hatred of the world.

### **The safety they are granted (v.15)**

What would be and often is our natural response to being in a place where we are hated? Get out. Leave. Find some other place to be. Particularly if that is not only an uncomfortable place, but a dangerous place. But Jesus does not ask that we be taken out. He asks that we be protected while remaining in. What makes the world most dangerous to us is that dark and dreadful enemy of our souls, Satan.

One of my favorite authors helpfully says: (Carson, *John*, p.565, adapted)

Until the consummation, when the last enemy is destroyed, 'the whole world is under the control of the evil one' (1 Jn. 5:19). The Christians' task, then, is not to be withdrawn from the world, nor to be confused with the world, but to remain in the world. We will be maintaining witness to the truth by the help of the Spirit [Paraclete] (15:26-27). We will be absorbing all the malice that the world can muster, finally protected by the Father himself, in response to the prayer of Jesus.

The cosmic, spiritual nature of the conflict is laid bare. The followers of Jesus are permitted neither the luxury of compromise with a 'world' that is intrinsically evil and under the devil's power, nor the safety of disengagement. But if the Christian pilgrimage is inherently perilous, the safety that only God himself can provide is assured. [It is certain for] the prayers of God's own dear Son will be answered.

## As Ones who are Sent by the Son

(v.16-19)

Jesus prays for His own as those who are sent by the Son.

<sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

The disciples are not merely being left in the world like an abandoned package. They are being sent into the world. The mailing label says, "To the world." The return address says, "From Jesus."

### Their heavenly origins

(v.16)

The disciples are *of heaven*. The disciples are not from the world. Like them, our spiritual source, our spiritual home, is not here. We do not get our faith, repentance, life or identity from here on earth. It comes from God, from the Father in heaven.

### Their spiritual apartness

(v.17)

Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.

The disciples are set apart from the world. This is what the word, "sanctify" means. To sanctify means to "set apart from ordinary use and to divine use." So the disciples are set apart from the world by the Word they have received from Christ. The Word and Spirit have severed them from sinfulness, from this present age, from the world. Yes, we are still here. But we are separated from the world. The Holy Spirit has cut along the dotted lines of the Word. The Holy Spirit has circumcised our hearts. So while we are still in the world, and we are no longer of the world because we have been cut from the fabric of the world and made of new fabric from heaven.

This setting apart was in the realm of truth, the Word of God. The world is what it is because of what it believes and denies. The world believes Satan's lies. The world denies the Lord's truth. This system of belief is what makes the world what it is. From the mix of lies and myths come desires and wants. This mangling of trusts and treasures is a value system that is corrupted and contaminates all it infuses. It is because of this that the disciples are set apart in truth. When we believe what God has revealed in the Word of God then we are being set apart from the lies, myths, trust, treasures, cravings, emotions, and actions that make up the ecosystem of the world.

This is how we can be here in the world, but set apart from the world.

### Their intentional mission

(v.18)

As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

We are here in the world on purpose, on mission. We are not here like a child whose parents have forgotten him at church and gone home without him. We are here like a child who is sent back into the building to get the rest of the family.

The setting apart was for ministry. They were chosen, called, and sent as ones marked out to serve. In the Old Covenant, to "sanctify" something was a one-time, once-for-all act. A thing (plate, cup, tent, building) or a person (priest, king, prophet, Levi, David,

Jeremiah) were “sanctified” or set apart to the purpose God intended. Holiness comes into this use of the word when that which was sanctified can no longer serve the purpose it was set apart for. So the ones Jesus is praying for have been set apart to be united to Him and to serve Him.

Let us be careful of the word “as”. It is a comparison, a likeness, a similitude. It is not an exact replication. You cannot add or imply “exactly as”. We are not sent into the world exactly like Jesus was. Yet we are sent into the world like Jesus was. We are sent to incarnate the love of God. We are sent to speak the truth of God. We are sent to live holy in the world. We are sent on an ambassadorial mission. We are sent by the Father. And most gloriously, we will go home to be with the Father when the mission is done.

### **Their personal provision**

**(v.19)**

And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

We are brought once again to the domino effect of this prayer. It looks like this:

The Father set apart Jesus and sent Him on the mission.

→ Jesus responds by setting Himself apart and dedicating Himself to the mission.

→ We are set apart and sent on the mission.

→ We respond by setting ourselves apart and dedicating ourselves to the mission.

This is what Jesus is talking about here. His self consecration (possibly better, dedication) is a response to His Father and a provision for His disciples. His own work then is functionally carried out in them. They are set apart by the Father and sent by Christ. But it is an active participation in that we respond by personally, practically, intentionally, and functionally setting ourselves apart from the world system and dedicating ourselves to the mission to the world.

What a stunning aspect of Jesus’ prayer. For His own He prays *recognizing* that they are not of the world, they are set apart from the world and He prays *requesting* the Father to send them into the world and protect them while they are in the world.

### **Reflect and Respond**

We are not directly being prayed for in this prayer. The eleven disciples standing around Jesus are for whom He is praying. The rest of the New Testament tells us that this prayer was answered.

While this section of the prayer may not be direct requests for us, it certainly is direct instruction to us. It tells us how we can pray for one another. It shows us that who we are and what is true of us can shape how we pray from one another.

As ones who are not of the world, have been set apart from the world, have been left in the world and sent to the world, we are guarded by the Father so that we will not return to the world.