

Sanctify Them

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[0 : 00] seated. And if you take your Bibles and turn to John chapter 17, which is saying of the way the Lord protects and keeps us, and that was the first petition that we found in our Savior's prayer for us. We're going to read John 17 verses 11 through 19.

John 17, 11, our Lord praying for His disciples, and that on the night of His arrest. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I'm still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them, I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

[1 : 52] We'll stop the reading of his prayer at that point. Prayer, we've said, is a window into the heart. You show by your prayers, the things you pray for, what is most important to you. And it was no different for our Savior. And so we have seen in this prayer, the heart of our Savior laid bare.

So far in his prayer, we have seen revealed his passion for the glory of God. We saw that in the first petition, Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. That was his burning passion. Secondly, we saw his passion for those that the Father gave him. We saw it in the way that he talked to the Father about his disciples. He rejoiced in them because they received his word and obeyed it and believed it when the world did not. They brought glory to him. And so by his talking to the Father about these that the Father had given him, we see his passion for them, but especially then in his petitions for them, how he prays for them. And we saw it last week with his first petition, Holy Father, protect them. Knowing the dangers of this hateful world that Jesus has just lived 33 years in, returning now to his Father, but leaving them in the world, a hateful world with an evil devil, he says, Father, protect them. They were precious to him. Now today we see a second petition in verse 17, and it is sanctify them. Now before we dig into this second petition, there's a question we need to answer it, and in answering it we'll learn another passion of our Savior's heart.

Well, this is the question. If the world is such a dangerous place as we know it is and as Jesus has said, dangerous for the sanctity and the protection and safety of his disciples, then why would the Lord Jesus intentionally leave them in such a world? He makes that clear in verse 15, my prayer is not that you take them out of the world. So why? Why not just take them out of the world to be with him?

[4 : 21] Well, that's the question. The answer is Jesus' passion for his mission to the world, his passion for the mission. We see it in verse 18, as you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. So what was his mission and what was his reason for coming? He came to seek and to save lost sinners for their everlasting good and for the glory of God. And it was his passion to complete the work that the Father gave him to do, and he did complete that, verse 4 says. He kept his face set as a flint to go up to Jerusalem and there to finish the work by dying on the cross for his people that were given to him, purchasing eternal salvation for them. That is for disciples from every nation, language, tribe. But then he left. And when he left this world to go back to the Father, there was only a handful of disciples. But he sent those disciples into the world on the same mission of salvation that the Father had sent him into the world for. As you sent me into the world,

I have sent them into the world. The Great Commission. That was the passion of our Savior's heart. And though it was originally, this Great Commission was originally given to the 12 disciples, Jesus is praying for them. The mission has come down to us, believers of every age, even to the end of the age as the Great Commission ends. And so we too have inherited this charge of going into the world to make disciples of every nation. And that is so important to the Lord Jesus that he will leave his disciples in a dangerous place, a place that wars against their safety and against their sanctification.

So believer, that's why you're still here. That's why you've not been taken to heaven. Why his prayer is not to take you out of the world, it's because he's sending you into the world with the saving gospel to gather all those that the Father has given to him.

So he could have chosen to take us out of the world the moment we believed. He could have taken you to heaven the moment you were converted. He could have sent angels to do the work of evangelism, but he didn't. So he would rather have lost sinners hear the gospel from redeemed sinners like you and me, than to hear it from angels that never sinned and never experienced salvation personally.

He would have us to be able to stand side by side with any other sinner, and to tell them in the first person how the grace of God amazes me.

[7 : 30] He has loosed me from my chains and set me free. How Jesus suffered and died for me, not because of anything that I had done, but that it was only because of his mercy that he, the sinless one, should die for one so vile as I, as we just sang.

So that's why he's left you here in the world, to glorify God by declaring with life and lip the excellencies of Jesus Christ and the transforming power of his gospel. He sent us into the world on the unfinished business of the mission. He completed his part, but there is yet work to be done in gathering his bride. So you're in this wicked world that is under the control of the evil one.

You're right where the Savior wants you. Think of it that way. Sometimes we want to be out of here, and there's good reason for feeling that, but we also need to realize we are right where God wants us to be, where the Savior wants us to be. You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt's to do the earth any good, it's got to be in contact with the rotting meat. You are the light of the world, but if the light is to illuminate anyone, it needs to be in contact with the darkness.

And if sinners are to be impacted with the gospel of Christ, they've got to be close enough to you to see and to hear from you what Christ does for sinners like you. So that means contact with the world, not isolation from it. And there's a part of us that wants to draw back and to isolate, and we need to hear this. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

And he came into this wicked world, didn't he? And so when heaven was filled with his praises, and earth was as dark as could be, Jesus came forth to be born of a virgin. He came into this world.

[9 : 44] That's where we're to be. That's where he's sending us. And yet, it's an unholy world that he's sending us into and leaving us in. And so he wants us to be in contact with the unholy world, but without conformity to it. And that's more than we're able to pull off. So he prays, Holy Father, sanctify them.

Sanctify them. He knows where we're at and prays, sanctify them by your word. Your word is truth. Now, to sanctify means to make holy, to set apart from common use to special use for God. It was used of the pots and pans and utensils in the temple that could be used for common use in the home. But no, these were holy utensils. They had been set apart from common use to be used in the service of God.

And so, Father, sanctify them. Set them apart from this world, apart from the unholiness of this world, and make them holy, set apart to serve you. So think what glory comes to God then, to have a holy people right in the midst of an unholy world. It's like having a good apple in a barrel of bad ones. You say, something's strange about this. This isn't normal. It doesn't usually happen that way. And yet, that is what is happening. A believer in the midst of an unbelieving family, a believer in the midst of workers surrounding them that are not believers, or in neighborhoods, we have believers in contact with unholy people. A holy Daniel in an unholy Babylon, a holy church in an unholy Corinth, an unholy Eldoret, an unholy Indiana. What is this? Oh, this is the work of God.

Oh, how the grace of God amazes me. Leonard Ravenhill said, the greatest miracle that God is doing today is to take an unholy man out of an unholy world, to make him holy, and then to put him back into the unholy world, and to keep him holy in it.

That's where the Savior wants you. That's where he wants you taking the gospel, but he doesn't want you conforming to it, so he prays, Father, sanctify them, make them holy, keep them holy. [12:21] So holiness. Think of how essential holiness is to our effectiveness in the mission, the mission that is such a passion to Jesus. Suppose I came to your house selling Miracle Grow hair formula, and as I bent over to get it out of my case, you saw this bald spot on the back of my head. Are you buying this? You say, no way. It doesn't work for you. Why should I care about it or give you money for it? And what should the worldling think when a professing Christian says, let me tell you about my Jesus and the salvation that he gives when my life is no different from theirs, just as unholy as theirs? Should they be all ears to hear about it? No.

No. No, holiness is absolutely essential for our mission to the world. A professing Christian is talking about a Jesus, a holy Jesus. We're ambassadors of a holy Christ, and our message to this sinful world is Jesus is the only Savior, and he's called Jesus. Why?

Because he saves his people from their sins. Wesley puts it in these words, he breaks the power of reigning sin. He sets the prisoner free. His blood can make the foulest clean. His blood availed for me.

That's the testimony we send to the world. And those bearing that message to the unholy world are to themselves be living demonstrations of its sin-cleansing power. To be walking billboards.

You've seen those people on the streets? They're walking billboards. That's the call of the Christian in this unholy world. To be different and to be holy lives, commending this holy Savior.

[14:20] Indeed, Paul says to Titus that we're to adorn the doctrines of God our Savior. Our lives are to be beautiful. The beauty of holiness that would adorn the gospel of Christ, showing that the grace of God that brings salvation also teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age, this present evil world.

And so we show that the same Jesus who justifies is the Jesus who sanctifies. And the same Jesus, the same blood that forgives sin, also dethrones sin.

So Spurgeon says the beauty of a holy life is the most powerful influence in the world next to the might of the Spirit of God. It's hard to argue with the power of a holy life, a Christ-like life.

So it's holy people that will do this unholy world the most good. Paul challenges Timothy. If a man cleanses himself from dishonorable things, he will be made holy, useful to the Master, and prepared for every good work. Holiness makes you useful to the Master, prepared to do any good work. You're only as useful as you are holy, useful to the Master. So on the eve of sending his disciples into the world on this gospel mission, what does Jesus pray for?

[16:02] Not for more money to fund their labors, not for more giftedness in speaking and preaching, not for more honor in the world's eyes if we just had more celebrities to speak this gospel.

No, he prays for more holiness, more holiness. And so for you and your mission, in the home, in the workplace, in the school, the church, the community, it's greater likeness to Jesus that we need.

And Jesus' prayer for his disciples shows us that. Now God has a powerful instrument and a plan to make us holy. You see it there in verse 17.

Sanctify them by the truth. Your word is truth. His instrument is the truth. The truth that sets us free. From what? From sin. The truth that exposes the temptations and lies of the world and the flesh and the devil. So we have God's truth in a book.

[17:08] The holy scriptures. So our commitment to holiness is no greater than our commitment to this book.

To know it, to understand it, to believe it, to live it, to think it, to obey it. So there's everything we need here for a life of what? Of godliness.

There's everything we need here to escape the corruption in the world through lusts and evil desires. Every word of God is profitable.

For what? For training in righteousness. That's holiness, isn't it? It's here that the glory of Christ is revealed. And beholding him, what happens?

We're transformed into his likeness that comes from one stage of glory to another, even by the Lord who is the Spirit. This book is God's plan for sanctifying us.

[18:07] Sanctify them, Father, by your truth. Your word is truth. So let's never forget the very practical purpose of God's word, whether we're reading it in our private reading, reading or whether we're hearing it preached and read in our corporate worship.

The very practical purpose of the word of God is to make you holy, to make you like God, to love him and to love one another as the two greatest commands are given to us.

So we measure our true proficiency in the word of God, whether we're really growing in the knowledge of God's word, not by how many Bible trivia questions we can answer.

Can you give all the names of the 12 disciples? Well, that'd be good if you can, but if not, you're not going to miss out a whole lot from that lack of knowledge.

We judge our true proficiency by how much of its thoughts and ways are becoming my thoughts and ways. So let me ask you, what changes have you made in your life in the last month or two simply because of what you've read here or heard here from the pulpit, from the classroom?

[19 : 30] What is there? What changes? What are you no longer doing? Because of what you've seen here in God's word. What have you started doing?

What are you doing more of? Because of what God's word says. You see, as we come to the word of God, we need to keep as our aim. Each time we come to it, our holiness.

Sanctify them through your word. Your word is true. That's how Jesus prays for you. So let's not walk away from the word unchanged by it.

Well, you know, Jesus did more than just pray for our sanctification. He lived and died for it. He lived and died for our sanctification. You see that in verse 19.

For their sakes, I sanctify myself that they also may be sanctified. Jesus sanctified himself.

[20 : 32] He set himself apart from the world, from sin, to serve the Lord. He did it perfectly. To study the life of Christ is to study holiness.

What does a life look like that's set apart to God in every part? Read the Gospels. Not my will, but yours be done.

That was holiness in action. Perfectly sanctified himself. Tempted in every way, yet without sin. In the wilderness, we see Jesus would rather starve than sin.

And you notice it was for your sake that he said no to temptation. Think of those 40 days and 40 nights. No, no, he resisted, resisted.

To the point of shedding his blood, he fought and resisted against sin. It was for your sake. For their sake, I sanctify myself. Why? So that they may be sanctified.

[21 : 32] And so him sanctifying himself led him to the cross, didn't it? Where he died to make men holy. John Flavel says that so in love is Christ with holiness that he will buy it for us with his blood.

For their sake, I sanctify myself that they may be sanctified. So just one leak is all it takes to sink a boat. And just one sin would be all that it would have taken to disqualify Jesus from saving us.

And so had he not sanctified himself, his death would not have had any sanctifying effect upon us, cleansing us of our sin. It would have done us no good. But because he did sanctify himself, his sacrifice was effectual and did cleanse us of our sin so that his holiness secures our holiness, our fitness for his presence.

Hebrews 10.10. So we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Hebrews 10.14. By one sacrifice, he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

There's two ways that our sanctification is talked about there. By one sacrifice, he is made perfect forever. He's given us a perfect righteousness, a perfect holiness for those who are being made holy.

[23 : 05] There's our ongoing imparted righteousness growing in sanctification. And all of it purchased by the blood of Jesus for us.

So when you think about your Lord Jesus, remember he ever lives to pray for you. Think of him as praying for your personal sanctification.

As I think of him, I must think of him. Praying, Holy Father, sanctify John Heaney. Make him to live and think like your word.

Make him like myself. Can we hear our Savior Christ praying to his Father for our personal holiness and then not be moved to pray for the same ourselves and to seek that which he is praying for, a greater conformity to his own holiness.

So what did you pray for this last week? What did you pray for this last month? Did you pray, Father, sanctify me. Make me holy. Let's let the prayers of Jesus inform our prayers and stir us to seek after the same by way of our petitions.

[24 : 24] It's what's important to him. That's what we're learning about his prayer. The Scottish pastor, Robert Murray McShane, often prayed, God, make me as holy as a redeemed sinner can be this side of heaven.

And be encouraged. Because if Jesus prays for your sanctification, then sanctified you will be. This prayer of Jesus can no more be denied than his prayer for your pardon. And his blood has purchased both, your pardon and your sanctification.

Well, let's take our hymnals and sing. God in the gospel of his son makes his eternal counsels known. We're singing of the precious privilege of having the word of God that sanctifies us in our language and seeing our savior there.

It's 262. Let's stand as we sing. Let's pray. Father, thank you for giving us another Lord's Day together as your people.

[25 : 28] We find it as an oasis in a dry and dusty land on our way home to heaven. Thank you for your precious word and for what we've seen of our savior today.

Thank you for what we've seen of his will revealed in your word. And now work in us. Do, Father, hear the prayer of your son at your right hand as he prays for our sanctification that what we've heard today would not be lost upon us.

but would find us thinking it and living it to your praise and glory and to the good of sinners around us and to one another as brothers and sisters on the way to heaven together.

We pray in Jesus' name with thanksgiving. Amen. Amen. We're dismissed. We're dismissed. We're dismissed. We're dismissed.