

John 17:9-19

### Introduction

We look further into Jesus' great High-Priestly prayer. This time going to consider what He prayed for His disciples. There is great value in studying this prayer, not least in what it teaches us about how we should pray for others and for ourselves.

Jesus' prayers were in harmony with the Father's will. If we pray along the same lines, i.e. in line with the Father's will, He promises to hear us. This indicates that what Jesus prays for, He is willing to give. His prayers are indirect promises, and also prophecies that He will perform and is able to perform. What He prays for His disciples, He also gives to His disciples.

### Special prayer for His disciples

**I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine** (John 17:9,10). It is not that Christ did not care for the world and long for its salvation. But this was a time of special circumstances, He was about to leave the disciples, and there would be particular problems because they would be lonely in the world without His presence.

The disciples had been given Him by the Father. He was their shepherd and He had special responsibility for them. They were going to be like orphans without Him at their side, out in the cold and persecuting world. And they had a special job to do for Him in the world. **And glory has come to me through them** (John 17:10). He had a special love for His own.

He loved the whole world, He came into the world for all, His redemption is sufficient for all, there was provision for all in the Cross, He cares for all, He calls all, He offers salvation to all, fully and sincerely. Yet He has a special interest in those given to Him by the Father, He has a very special love for them, and He does things for them which He does not do for the rest who are unbelieving and disobedient.

His special intercession is one grand secret of believer's safety. We are daily watched, thought about, provided for, by one whose eye never slumbers nor sleeps. **He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them** (Hebrew 7:25). They will never perish because He never ceases to pray for them, and His prayers must prevail. We can lean back on this truth and take heart from it. This is one of the peculiar privileges of the believer. "No man's condition is so safe as ours. The prayer of Christ is more than sufficient to strengthen us, be we never so weak" (Hooker).

### Prayer for their safe-keeping

**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 Scripture would be fulfilled** (John 17:12). Although the word "except" is used here,

it means “none has been lost, *on the other hand*, or, *in contrast*, Judas is lost”, i.e. the adversative case, not the exceptive case. C.f. same use of “except” in Mark 13:32.

Jesus does not pray that His disciples should be taken out of the world, but that they should be kept safe from evil while they remain in the world. They are not to go into monastic exclusion. They had a job to do in the world. He does not pray that they will escape, but that they will have victory. Not to desert the post to attain holiness, but to win victory.

They had a job of work to do, as have we. Faith has to be lived and seen to be lived in the hurly burly, rough and tumble of life. The Gospel does not offer us release from our problems, but a way to solve our problems. Does not offer easy peace, but triumphant warfare. Not a life in which troubles are escaped and evaded, but faced up to and conquered. The Christian is not *of* this world but he is *within* this world, and his faith has to be lived out. Never desire to abandon the world but to win it. But do not be contaminated by it – its spirit and its values.

So often we are in the situation we are in because we are not living close to the Lord. We are in the world by God’s appointment and have a job to do in the world. We are meant to do good in the world. We need to develop in character, courage, faith and love. This is our training ground. We learn to value Christ more, and long for home in heaven. Long to be away from the world, where we are weak and few. **Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! I would fly away and be at rest** (Psalm 55:6).

Interesting to note the three prayers which God does not grant to his saints in Scripture – Moses (Exodus 2:15), Elijah (1 Kings 19:4), and Jonah (Jonah 4:3,8). These three wanted to escape the difficult situation they were in – but God had different plans. It is wrong to pray for ease – Jesus did not pray for ease for His disciples. He did not pray that they would get to heaven without any troubles, conflict or persecution. He rebukes false asceticism, which shrinks from contact with an alien world, desire to run away from trials and temptations, and exemption from sorrows. We have to remain here, to be tried and assaulted, yet kept from sin. This is the surest plan to promote our sanctification, and to glorify Christ. He who would win a crown must first carry a cross and show himself to be light in the midst of darkness.

This is a practical matter. How often we enjoy a Sunday because we are away from the world’s temptations and persecuting people. It is good – and God-ordained – that we should have this one day in seven set aside to meet with His people, to worship together, to listen to Christ, to rest from the world. But we must not wish every day was like this – we have a job to do in the world, and we must not shrink from it. Let us be satisfied that the Lord knows better than we do what is for our good. Let us leave our times in His hands. Be content to abide here patiently as long as He pleases, whatever our lot – so long as He keeps us from evil. Nothing so glorifies His grace as to live like Daniel in Babylon, and the saints in Nero’s household.

Christ’s prayer gives us firm ground of confidence that we are more than conquerors in the life-long fight we have to wage. **My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth** (Psalm 121:2). Therefore we can dwell in peace in the midst of an alien world. **The Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one** (2 Thessalonians 3:3). Do not be afraid to go out into the world on Monday

morning. Do what you can. Do not go amongst people with fear. Do not be ashamed to look duty in the face. Do not be cowards and run away. He is praying for you – that you will be kept.

### Prayer for their sanctification

**Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth** (John 17:17). Sanctifying means setting apart for His special use, to be holy and reflect His character. Sanctification begins at new birth when we come into the family of God. We increasingly bear the family likeness. It is the real evidence that we are born again. It is the inward work of the Holy Spirit. God looks for the evidence, the world looks for the evidence, and so should we.

There are admittedly degrees in growth, and it is never completed in this life. A gradual process - development of the fruits of the spirit and Christ's character, concern to obey God's law, habitual endeavour to do God's will, love for all believers, doing good in the world, seeking to lessen the sorrow and increase the happiness of those around us.

How does the Spirit work in us? Means of grace – prayer, public worship, the Lord's Table. These are the appointed channels. Also regular attendance on ministry of the Word and private reading of the Word. **Your word is truth.** Holiness and truth are linked. The Word of God contains the truth whereby we are sanctified. Truth is not in private revelations or dreams or opinions. It comes from God and is found in His Word. Truth is revealed to us. Truth which is needful for us to believe and live on is fixed, and God's Word is sufficient.

The Word is the essential, authoritative and eternal truth. Therefore how earnestly we should search the Scriptures. Learn, hold and hold fast. This book will deal with sin, nourish grace, urge to holiness of life. Not to be known intellectually, but practically. Obeyed and acted on. His Word to be brought to bear on our minds, wills, conscience and affections. If we neglect the Word, we will not grow as Christians.

When we use the Word, pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance. Ask for definite thought for yourself. Think and pray it in – look for the precept, warning, promise, experience, and command. Use it as basis for prayer. Ask that we may realize it in experience. Surrender to its truth and power. Trust God to reproduce it in the life.

### Conclusion

Take comfort that Christ prays for us, as He prayed for His disciples. Use His prayer as a guide for our own prayers. He continually prays that we be kept from evil, and be sanctified in truth. We can pray the same for ourselves and for others.