

The Lord's prayer for His own

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[0 : 00] It comes to the Gospel according to John chapter 17. I am reading verse 17. Sanctify then be thy truth, thy word, faith truth.

How thou have sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for thy sake thou sanctify myself, that thou also might be sanctified to thee too.

Now before the Easter holiday we were doing a study from a large lost discourse to the disciples in chapters 14 to 16 of this Gospel.

And I have intended to study chapter 17 and I have to do so just in two short studies. So this evening we will begin to look at this John chapter 17.

Now Jesus had spoken to his disciples as we saw in chapters 14 to 16. It was his farewell, the Spirit, to his disciples.

[1 : 08] And now he tends to speak to his Father, to his Father in heaven. And we have recorded here a prayer of the Son of God. The only prayer of any length recorded from the lips of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And what a great privilege it takes for us to overhear, as it were, a prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ. Someone has called this the most precious fragment of the past that we possess.

The most precious fragment of the past that we possess. But we are privileged to overhear the prayer that the Lord Jesus Christ uttered to his Father.

The prayer that he prayed on the eve of his passion. How often he had said previously, My hour has not yet come. But here he says, Your hour has come.

And it is his prayer, For not our sake. And the prayer may be divided into three sections. But it is first of all a prayer he makes for himself in verses 1 to 5.

[2 : 18] That he might be glorified. And then it's a prayer he makes for his disciples in verses 6 to 19. And that prayer is that they might be sanctified or consecrated.

And then the third section is the prayer he makes for all believers, all who afterwards believe in him. And that prayer is that we might be one or that we might be united.

So this evening, God willing, we will make a study of it. In a section in particular, in which he prays for the consecration of the disciples.

The consecration of his disciples. But let us look briefly, first of all, at the first prayer he makes in verses 1 to 5. And that prayer for the glorifying of himself.

The prayer for the glorifying of himself. Father the Father come, glorify thy son, that thy son also may glorify thee.

[3 : 20] And there's two parts to this prayer that he makes for himself. And the first part, that he may be glorified on the cross. That he might be glorified on the cross.

Now, Jesus was glorified in the miracles that he performed while he was here upon earth. And all these miracles that Christ did when he was here upon earth were really signs that pointed to his glory and his divinity.

There were signs. And now we come to the greatest sign of all, the cross. This is the greatest sign of all, the cross. And through it, as Jesus is going to be glorified, then something is going to be self-sand-off.

What is the estimate end of the cross? The estimate end of it is that the Father will be glorified. Glorify thy son, that thy son may also glorify thee.

And what is the saying is that he might be glorified on the cross, in order that the Father himself may be glorified. And how a lot come about.

[4 : 33] Well, when he completes the work on the cross, when he is glorified on the cross, then your love and the holiness and the justice and the goodness of God, your sign source.

Is there any place in the universe where you see the life and the goodness and the mercy and the justice and the righteousness and the truth of God shining forth clearly as in the cross?

It's our glory in creation, but creation does not speak to us of the mercy of God. That the cross speaks to us of all the attributes of God in perfect harmony working together for the salvation of man.

And so, when the Son will be glorified, the Father will be glorified. And the second thing is, that when the Son will be glorified, the people will be saved.

As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. When he is glorified, he will be given the power to give eternal life to his people.

[5 : 44] And it's a wonderful combination here. The Father gives the elect to the Son, and gives authority to the Son to give them eternal life.

And what is eternal life? Eternal life is the knowledge of God. So there is this beautiful coming together of the work of the Father and of the work of the Son.

And all this comes about at the result of the cross. Without the cross it would be impossible. Unless the Son has to be glorified, or these things will never happen.

Unless the Son is glorified on the cross, all this will not take place. And that's why his prayer is not selfish. He's not praying just for himself.

He's praying for the glory of the Father, and he's praying for the salvation of his people. Glorify me, he says, that it's in order that the Father might be glorified, and that the people might be saved.

[6 : 43] And therefore, he prays this prayer. And in verse 5, he says, Glorify thine me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

In other words, not only glorify me on the cross, but glorify me in heaven. Because when Christ is going to be restored to heaven, and when he's going to be there in all his glory, then will be accomplished all the work that he came to do.

Because that will be the final vindication that the Father has accepted him, that the Father has been pleased with the work that Christ did.

So that's the prayer he makes for himself. A prayer that he will be glorified. But he'll come then, this evening, to look at the prayer that he makes for his disciples, which we have in verses 16 to 19.

And this is our prayer, above all, for the consecration of his disciples. And there's two aspects to this prayer. First of all, in verses 6 to 11, you have a description of the people he's praying for, the disciples.

[7 : 54] And a few things we find out about these people, these disciples he's praying for.

I have manifested thy name, unto the men, who thou givest me out of the world. And the first thing therefore is, that these disciples do not belong to the world.

They don't belong to the world. They have been given to Christ out of the world. They have been given to Christ. They are saved. They are saved.

To those whom you give me out of the world, he says, I have revealed your name. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me out of the world.

What the first thing we can say about these disciples? They don't belong to the world. And it points to the fact that there are two basic communities in the world.

[9 : 01] There's the world, the mass of humanity, the mass of mankind, and that's what we might call the given ones. Those who are given to Christ by the Father, they are the church, the people of God.

And so there's the two communities in the world, the two kingdoms, the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. And these disciples do not belong to the world.

That's the first thing. And it is an understanding of the prayer that Christ is going to pray for them, as you shall see in a moment. The first thing then is, they do not belong to the world.

The second thing is, that they have the true knowledge of God. These disciples have the true knowledge of God. I have revealed your name to them.

They have obeyed your word. I give in the words you give me, and they accept me then. They know with certainty that I came from you. They believe that you sent me.

[10 : 02] All these things are true of them. Christ came with a revelation of the Father. And what happens? The disciples accepted that revelation. They believed the word.

They know with certainty that Christ came from the Father. That Christ was the first one of God. And so this is what is also true of them. They have accepted what was told them by Christ.

What was revealed to them by Christ. They are true disciples of Christ. They are followers of things. They are told what he has done for them. What the Father has done for them.

And so they, in consequence, were unable to do themselves. They believed. They accepted. They received the word. That's the second thing that is true about them.

And then the third thing that is true about them is this. That they continue to live in the world. They are not off the world. They have a true knowledge of Christ.

[11 : 05] And the third thing is they continue to live in the world. Although they were given to Christ out of the world. And what's inspired from one community to the other.

They still live in that world out of which they were taken. They still live in the world. And I'll say there are two communities that are spiritually distinct.

They are not socially segregated. There's no segregation. They are still in the world. And they are still living in society. And so they are not off the world.

Yet they are in the world. They are taking their place in society. They are not like the Pharisees. They are not precipitous. They are not taking refuge in monasteries.

And it's very easy for the evangelical church to take that kind of attitude. The monastic spirit is very much with that spirit. And it's manifesting itself in many evangelical churches in these days.

[12 : 12] But that's not what we are to be. And that's not what we are to do. We are to continue to live in the world. We are not to segregate ourselves. We are not to shut ourselves away.

And so there's a tension in the Christian life. And the New Testament recognizes this tension. We are not of the world. But we are in the world. We are not of it.

But yet we are in it. And we're really in it. We're involved in it. We're in society. And we are to take our place in society. So you see the tension is set up.

The tension that Christ is going to pray about. And it's against that background and that background alone that we can appreciate the prayer that Christ is now to make for his disciples.

He's going to pray for people who don't belong to the world and yet who are to pray their full power in living in that world. And not the tension and not the problem that's facing them.

[13 : 14] Now what's the prayer secondly? The prayer that he makes for these disciples. And the burden of the prayer is that they may be kept.

He prays that they may be kept. The first thing is that they may be kept in the Father's name. That they may be kept in the Father's name, you see.

The Father had given his name to Christ. That is the revelation of his nature. And the Son had given that revelation to his disciples.

And during his earthly ministry, Christ had kept these disciples in the Father's name.

In the revelation of the Father's nature, they had been kept. And none had been lost. They had been preserved. Only one had been lost. And that was the Son of Perdition.

[14 : 10] But that was in order that the scripture might be fulfilled. And therefore none were really lost. None of those that were his were really lost. They had been kept. They had been preserved.

Now he was leaving them in the wild. And what did he do? He prayed that the Father would keep them faithful to the name. As he had kept them faithful to the name, but to the nature of God, when he was here upon earth.

So he is now praying to the Father that they would be kept faithful to the name, to the revelation that was given them by Christ.

And that was the first prayer he prayed for them. That they would be kept in the Father's name. Kept faithful to the revelation of the divine nature.

And he's praying to his Father for the fact that they may be kept. And that they may be kept, he says, so that they may be one as we are one. That they may be one as we are one.

[15 : 14] And you see, it's loyalty to reveal truth. That's a major means to Christian unity. He wants to keep them in the truth, in the nature of God, in the revelation of that nature, in order that they may be one as we are one.

It's loyalty to reveal truth. That keeps people together. That is the thing that helps Christian unity.

Loyalty to the truth. You see, some people tell us that it doesn't matter about the truth. The fact that matters is that we are one. But that's not what Jesus says.

He says the closer to the truth, the greater the unity. The closer to the truth, the greater the unity. The more that they are kept in the revelation of God, as close as possible to the revelation of God, the more they are to be one.

The more they will be brought together. The nearer they will come to one another. That they may be one as we are one. And the second thing he prays for them is that they may be kept from the evil one.

[16 : 28] That they may be kept from the evil or from the evil one. Verse 15, I pray not that thou should take them out of the world, but that thou should keep them from the evil or from the evil one, as most of our modern translations have it.

That they may be kept from the world's ruler and the world's God who is faithful, because he is the one who is in control of this world.

And surely that implies the terrible character of the danger to hope they are exposed in this world. That they may be kept from the evil one who will seek that they be conformed to the world's standards.

And that's the danger that they are in. That they may be tempted by Satan to conform to the world's standards. So I pray, says Jesus, that they may be kept from the evil one who is working in this world and seeking to conform them to the world's standards.

Remember what Paul said about Demas. Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world. Or as one translation puts it, he fell in love with this age.

[17 : 43] The world had come in some guise that suited the desires of Demas' heart. And who was behind that? Oh, it was Satan, the prince of the world.

It was the evil one. And he came to Demas. And he arose within Demas, those un-mortified desires. And Demas forsook the apostle for his love of this present world.

And you see, if the disciples of Christ don't have this constant intervention of divine grace, they cannot be preserved in this world.

I pray that they may be kept from the evil one and preserved from being conformed to this world. That's Jesus' prayer for them.

He prays that they may be kept in the Father's name. He prays that they may be kept from the evil one. And thirdly, prays that they may be sanctified or that they may be consecrated.

[18 : 46] And I think consecrated is the better word here. Sanctify or consecrate them in thy truth or by thy truth for thy word is truth.

Now to sanctify or to consecrate is to crucify for a sacred use. It is to make holy. But you see, it's to make holy for a purpose.

And I must admit myself that I often understood this word here, sanctify. I just mean to make holy or to make a righteous or to make people different from what they were.

But the whole answer to this here, I believe, is consecration for mission. Consecration for mission. Because as you see from the following verses, it's on this question of mission that our Lord is concentrating.

As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. And for them, I consecrate myself. And you see, Jesus didn't need to be made holy in a sense in which we need to be made holy.

[20 : 01] If the word just meant be made holy, then it wouldn't apply to Jesus. But you see, it means more than that. It means consecration for mission in the world.

And surely that's the key to relieving the tension we have. We are not of the world. We are in the world. What do we do? We go to the world.

We are on mission to the world. And what Jesus is praying for here is consecration for mission in the world. Christ has sent his disciples into the world as the Father sent him.

We are to go into the world as Christ came into the world from the Father. And Christ makes his mission the pattern for the church's mission.

Christ consecrated himself to the will of the Father. He consecrated himself to do the work of the Father. He identified himself with the need of the world.

[21 : 09] He lived for the Father. He suffered. He died for the sake of others. And if he had not done that, if he had not consecrated himself, then there would be no consecration for us.

There would be no hope for the world. But that's what he did. He consecrated himself to the work of mission. And now we pray that his disciples will be consecrated to the same work.

Consecrate them through thy truth to this work of mission. Make them holy, yes, but also commission them. Let them see the obligations in the truth for them to go out into the world to do our work for Christ.

He is concerned for his disciples in the world. He is concerned for the continuance of the work in the world. He had come to do our work.

Who is going to continue that work? Well, it's his disciples that are going to continue it. He wants them to continue the work that he came to do. This is what he's asking them to do.

[22 : 20] And therefore, they must be consecrated to it. They must be consecrated to bring mission to the world. Not just consecrated to be a holy hydro, to be separated in a monastery or somewhere, but to be consecrated to do mission in the world, to go out into the world as he went out into the world to give himself for the good of the world.

That's what we are to do. And you see, that's what relieves some of the tension. We are not to withdraw from the world. We are not to conform to the world.

We are in it, but we are not of it, but we are sent into it. These are the three things of the crew of the Christian. He is not of it, yet he is in it, but he is sent to it.

That's what he is to do. And that's why he has to be consecrated. And that's why Christ wants him to be consecrated in this world. It's a dangerous thing to withdraw from the world.

It's a dangerous thing to give up society as if there was no hope for it. or as if it was our duty to be separate from it. And we heard or read something of that from our own moderator last week as he addressed the General Assembly and spoke about the danger of disestablishment of the Christian faith.

[23 : 52] The way ahead, he says, I am sure, as is so commonly advertised these days, is not to withdraw from the arena and to set up our own Christian schools. It is rather to stand fast and to claim the crown rights of Christ over the whole realm of education so that all children of all citizens of the realm, and not only those of our Christian families, may be molded by the word of truth.

The unique nature of the Christian faith and its claim to be the sole rule of faith and life gives it a determinative function in providing a social structure that alone can bring deliverance to humanity bound by superstition and avarice.

We are not to withdraw from the world and we are seeing the repercussions in our society today of Christians withdrawing from the world. We are reaping the effects of it in our society today and the address goes on to speak about these things.

We cannot withdraw from the world. The Christian must be in the world as a light enough but we must be in it. But equally so, we must not be conformed to it.

We must not be conformed to it. Because what happens when you become conformed to the world? When you become conformed to the world, you lose your message. It leaves you without a message.

[25 : 17] If you go alongside the world and say really there's no difference between you and us, then it leaves you without a distinctive message. That's the trouble by being conformed to the world.

Lakin Ford put it this way, without separation we have an audience but nothing to say. Without identification we have something to say but no audience.

Without separation we have an audience but nothing to say. Conform to the world and no message because we're so like the world. Without identification we have something to say and there's a lot of evangelicals who have something to say but they have no audience they have no one to speak to because they're not in the wild.

They're keeping to themselves and that's no good. What is the answer then? The answer is to be consecrated to mission, consecrated to service, consecrated to the truth, mind and life moulded by the word of God, moulded by the truth of the Bible, so that you're thinking the right way and you live in the right way.

You don't adopt the world's method, you don't follow the world's pattern, you follow the Bible, you're moulded in the Bible and you're moulded in the word of God and you're the source of the earth and the life flight of the you're going out to the world, you're sent into the world and that's what Christ is praying for his disciples here.

[26 : 59] That's his prayer for them. He prays to the Father that the work that he came to do will be carried on by his disciples into that end.

May they be consecrated, may they be sanctified and may they therefore fulfill the mission that he wants them to fill in this world.

Amen. Let us pray. Our gracious God and Father in heaven, we thank thee for the intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank thee for his church on high.

We thank thee for his prayers. We thank thee for that work that he came to do and has completed and yet thy intercession is continuing at thy right hand.

And we thank thee for all that has been accomplished through it. We thank thee for the fact that thy church has been restored and kept throughout the generations. We thank thee for what thy church has been able to do by thy grace and by thy strength.

[28 : 05] and we pray that we would fulfill the true function of thy church in this age in which we live. Grant us we pray the wisdom and strength to do it. That we would know what it is to be in the world and yet not of the world so that we might be on mission to this world that we might sell the world as Christ did when he was here upon there help us to follow his example and may we be consecrated and set apart for this great work we ask it in his name and for his sake Amen