

Going: Next Door and Beyond

The Church and the Reputation of Jesus: John 17

Intro: Jesus is facing the cross. He may be in the Upper Room as he prays this prayer. He may be in the Garden of Gethsemane. But he is in the last hours of his earthly life, and he is pouring out his heart to the Father in Heaven.

This prayer is the conclusion of a long address to his disciples that begins after the foot-washing and includes John 14-16. He has told them he is going away. He has promised them the Holy Spirit as their Comforter, Companion, and Guide.

He began this prayer by praying for himself (v2-5). He then prayed for his disciples whom he was leaving in the world (v6-19).

And then he prayed for us (v20-26).

***I love to hear Janet pray. When I listen in to her conversation with God I hear the things that are truly on her heart. I am always blessed to hear her pray, and I am able to adjust my own priorities so they will better conform to what is truly important.

This is how it should be now as we listen to the Savior pray. We are going to discover his heart in these, the last hours of his earthly sojourn. And we will be compelled to make adjustments in our own priorities as we overhear him praying.

I. We Are Under DIVINE PROTECTION (17:2-4, 11)

A. God has left us on this planet after saving us for one grand and glorious purpose: to bring glory to God by pointing others to Christ as Savior. *Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent* (John 17:3).

B. We have work to do just as Jesus had work to do: *I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do* (v4). Jesus stayed until he could say, “It is finished.” Then he left this world, and left his disciples here in this world to finish their work. He told them, “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12). In KJV—“He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also. And greater works than these shall he do...”

C. Jesus prayed for our protection in this world: *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* (v11).

1. “Protect”—to guard, to carefully tend to; to keep.

2. “the power of your name” is how God will protect the followers of Jesus left here on this planet. “The name” refers to the character, the essence of the person.

3. “The name you gave me” is the name of “JESUS” which means “Jehovah saves.” He is named this because “he will save his people from their sins.” The name of Jehovah is imbedded in the name of Jesus. This is the name given to Moses at the BURNING BUSH in the wilderness.

II. HIS NAME PROTECTS US in THREE WAYS (17:11-18)

A. His Name protects our UNITY: “so that they may be one as we are one” (v17:11). God is ONE. His people are ONE. This UNITY is found in and protected by HIS NAME.

1. The LOSS OF JUDAS was a violation of the unity of the original band of disciples. His departure from the group serves as an illustration of what happens when you reject the name of Jesus as Savior and Messiah. And it serves as a warning to anyone who would depart from the band of disciples in our own day.

2. Unity in the Body of Christ is essential to the INTERNAL INTEGRITY of the Church. Paul laments the loss of unity in the church at Corinth. He describes how that loss of unity is tearing apart the body of believers. He urges them to lay aside their differences and serve Christ as one body. He reminds them that everyone is important to the body, that no one is dispensable. He insists that the members we think are not so important are actually vital to the operation of the body of Christ.

***We live in a day when the church has become AGE-GRADED, when young people flock to one church and old people to another church. My father was recently lamenting this condition in the church of Jesus Christ—that the generations are separating and are no longer rubbing shoulders as they once did in the body of Christ. The church of Jesus Christ is impoverished by such division whether it is generational, racial, economic, or national. We need each other to maintain the integrity and strength of the body.

3. UNITY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST is essential to our witness in the world. We protect the reputation of Jesus in the world by maintaining the Unity of the Church. They will know we are Christians by our LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER. Here Jesus prays that we may be One “so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:21).

The unity of believers is clear evidence in the world of a supernatural and divine presence among them. The world is full of DISUNITY—wars and rumors of war. People are divided into class, national, and ethnic camps.

The church of Jesus Christ crosses all class, national, and ethnic boundaries. As such, it is evidence of God’s presence and power in the world. Jesus intends to break down the walls of hostility that exist between people. He accomplished this through his death upon the cross “by which he put to death the enmity” (Ephesians 2:16).

B. His name protects us from THE EVIL ONE (v15).

1. You have a terrible Enemy who is targeting you every day and seeking to devour you. You are like sheep in the midst of wolves in this world. Pastor Peter wrote: *Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith* (I Peter 5:8).

2. You must focus, not on your Enemy, but on your Lord who is your only victory. The only protection the sheep really has is in his SHEPHERD.

3. You have authority over all the demons of hell in the name of Jesus. Peter used this name to heal the lame man at the gate. Your protection from the devil is in the person and character of Jesus Christ whose name you bear. He pleads for your protection from the Evil One.

***I remember my Grandmother praying. I was about 10 years old when she came to stay with us for awhile. She and Grandpa were having difficult times in their marriage though I did not know that at the time. But her prayers were cries of anguish wrenched from her heart, and they astonished me and even frightened me. When Grandmother prayed she left it all before the throne.

C. His name protects us from CONFORMITY TO THIS WORLD (17:16-18)

1. You are SENT INTO THE WORLD. You are on a mission here on this

planet. Just as Jesus was sent into the world, so you are sent into the world. This is a critical part of your own self-image and style in the world. God left you here for a purpose. It is the same purpose for which he sent his One and Only Son into the world—that the world might be saved.

This sense of mission in the world colors and directs everything you say and do in the world. When you walk out your front door and enter the community, you are on a mission.

2. You are NOT OF THE WORLD: *They are not of the world, even as I am not of it* (v16). You are IN THE WORLD but you are NOT OF THE WORLD anymore than Jesus was of this world. He came from Heaven which is his home, and you also are a child of God, and your true home is heaven.

Peter addresses Christians this way: *To God's elect, strangers in the world...* (1 Peter 1:1). Pastor Peter instructs you to live “as strangers here in reverent fear” (1 Peter 1:17). *This world is not my home, I'm just a-passing through. My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue. The angels beckon me from heaven's open door. And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.*

3. Jesus prays for your SANCTIFICATION: *Sanctify them by your truth; your word is truth... For them I sanctify myself that they too may be truly sanctified* (v17, 19). This sanctification is a “setting apart unto God.” It is separation from evil, but it is also separation unto God. Holiness is not simply the absence of sin but the presence of a vital connection with God.

Your separation happens through the TRUTH which is God's Word. So we are people who delight in the Word of God. We do not follow the course of this world or the counsel of this world: *Blessed is the man who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly...But his delight is in the law of the Lord* (Psalm 1:1,3). We are planted like a tree by this river of Truth.

4. We are NOT CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD. *Be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind* (Romans 12:2). We are not shaped by or forced into the MOLD OF THIS WORLD. We do not conform. We resist conforming. Instead, we allow the Word of God to change our minds, to transform our thinking, our speaking, and our acting in the world. This is truly revolutionary as a style in the world.