

The God Who Prays for You – *John 17:6-19*

Introduction – Every religion has a god and most religions have their adherents pray to those gods in some fashion. But here we see that our Lord and Savior, Who is God, prays for us. And as we listen to Him pray, we learn what He cares about, what concerns Him for us, what He wants most for us, and for His heavenly Father. We see His gracious, intercessory care for us.

Jesus Prays with Grace and Confidence for His Disciples (vv6-8) – As the Son speaks to the Father about His disciples, the chosen ones of the Father, He knows these eleven will stagger in their faith, scatter at His arrest, and even deny knowing Him before the authorities. And yet, consider the gracious account He gives of these – they have kept the Father’s word (v6), they have known that all things the Father has given Jesus are from the Father (v7), they have received His words (v8), and know surely that Jesus came from the Father (v8), even that the Father sent Him (v8). *“The least degree of faith is very precious in His sight. Though it be no bigger than a grain of mustard seed, it is a plant of heavenly growth and makes a boundless difference between the possessor of it and the man of the world”* – Ryle.

The key to this confidence is in the first sentence: *“I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world”* (v6). If the Father has given them to Jesus, then they will not be lost (6:39), and if Christ has manifested (revealed) the name of God to these men, their salvation is secure. *“The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe”* (Prov 18:10). We know God because His name has been manifest to us. His righteousness is ours and it is perfect even though we are not yet sanctified. And so He continues to pray for us...

Jesus Prays for our Preservation (vv9-12) – Jesus prays for His disciples, but not for the world generally (vv9-10). This does not diminish God’s heart for the world (3:16), yet this prayer is clearly for His disciples particularly as He leaves, and leaves them in a world that will hate them (v14). And this intercession continues on to this day for all His disciples, that is, for us (Rom 8:34, Heb 7:25). *“The special intercession of the Lord Jesus is one grand secret of the believer’s safety. He is daily watched, and thought for, and provided for with unfailing care by One whose eye never slumbers and never sleeps. They never perish because He never ceases to pray for them, and His prayer must prevail”* – Ryle.

Jesus kept them and lost none, save the “son of perdition,” Judas, which fulfilled the scriptures (v12, Psalm 69:25, 109:8, Acts 1:20). And as He departs, Christ prays to His “Holy Father” that He would keep them as well (v11). Calling the Father “Holy” is not arbitrarily used here. It is the same word that is used to speak of our sanctification in vv17-19. His name, “Holy Father” is the basis of Christ’s appeal for us and His confidence for us. *“May the name of the God of Jacob defend you”* (Psalm 20:1). *“Save me, O God, by your name”* (Psalm 54:1). And so it is through the power of His name and being united in His name, kept in His name, that Jesus (and you individually) have confidence. Our confidence is in the immovable grip the Father has on us and not the inconsistent grip that we have on Him.

Jesus Prays that We Might Have His Joy as Protection in this World (vv13-16) – Jesus does not want us to leave the world even though it hates and will always hate us (vv13-14a). In the midst of this evil world, He does pray that God would keep us “from the evil one” (v14b) as He taught us to pray, *“do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil”* (Matt 6:13). There is evil to be found in the world, the flesh, and the devil. The emphasis here seems to be on the world and the devil’s influences upon us in the world (2 Cor 10:3-5).

There is pleasure to be found in worldliness, but it is a pleasure that fades and, in the end, condemns us. There are also hardships in this world, circumstances that inflict suffering and loss that will be without purpose or meaning outside of Christ. But there is a joy, a deep joy that the Son has in His work and in our destiny/glory that He prays would sustain and protect and fill us (v13). It is the joy the Son had as He went to the cross (Heb 12:2). It is not our joy first, it is His, and He prays it would be given to us in full. It is a joy Paul would command of us (Phil 4:4) and would himself enjoy in the midst of tribulation (2 Cor 12:9-10). It is a joy that Jesus commands of us when we are persecuted (Matt 5:11-12). It is a gladness that the desert has because of the new bloom (Isaiah 35:1-2). It is joy because of what God is doing in and through our trials (James 1:2-4). It is a joy the world cannot have because it is the fruit of the indwelling Spirit (Gal 5:22). *“The only cheerful Christianity is a Christianity that draws its gladness from deep personal experience of communion with Jesus Christ...If we abide in Christ, His joy will abide in us, and our joy will be full”* – A. Maclaren.

Jesus Prays for our Sanctification by His Word (vv16-17) – All of the scripture above is necessary to reveal and partake of what God has for us. And so, Jesus prays for our sanctification by the Word of His truth. To be sanctified is to be set apart for holy purposes. But it is not to be set apart necessarily from the world's troubles. It is to be in those troubles for holy purposes. *“They, who are once effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them, the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified; and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord”* – WCF XIII.1.

Jesus is not praying for an easy life. He is praying for a holy life. He is not praying for a pleasant, simple life. He is praying for a life full of His joy, a confident joy that God will complete what He has begun, both in our lives individually (Phil 1:6) as well as in this world (Hab 2:14, John 3:17).

Jesus Prays for our Mission in the World (vv18-19) – In this confidence, Jesus prays that we would be sent by the Father just as He was sent. He states that He is setting Himself apart (sanctifying Himself) so that we also would be set apart and sent (Matt 28:18-20). God had predestined the end from the beginning, but this did not make Christ's coming, suffering, and dying unnecessary or irrelevant. In the same way, never allow yourself to think that God's sovereignty makes your witness optional or irrelevant. Christ has sent you to your family, your neighborhood, your workplace, and He has sovereign and good purposes. Look at this troubled world in our day. We were made for just this time. He has answered Jesus' prayer and we have been sent.

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