

The Gospel of John

Spiritual Purity

John 17:17-19

INTRODUCTION:

During the last few weeks we have been examining verses 11 -19 in the High Priestly prayer as Jesus prayed specific requests, not only for the eleven disciples, but for all who would believe in Him through their word. This, of course, is referring to everyone who will believe after Jesus leaves to go to the Father in Heaven.

In review, He prayed **first** for our **spiritual security** in verses 11 and 12. Jesus protected all that God had given Him and did not allow anyone of them to perish except Judas so that the scriptures would be fulfilled. He now needs God to protect them as He faces the cross. He also knows that all of His children will need spiritual protection in this world.

Secondly He prayed for our **spiritual unity**," at the end of verse 11. Not praying that we all get along together in life but that we have an invisible spiritual oneness. Just as Christ and God are one, Jesus wanted us to also be one with them. We receive this oneness because Christ is in us and we share his attributes. Including eternal life which we have now because we have been made alive by the very life of God.

In verse 13, He prayed for our **spiritual joy**. He prayed for our joy in the midst of a troubled world. And we have that joy! We have joy in our salvation with all its blessings.

Fourthly, in verses 14-16, He prayed our **spiritual immunity**. That we would be protected from the evil one. Despite the fact that we are in the world, we are not of the world, even as our Lord was not of the world. We are in a dangerous place, and He prays for our protection, our immunity from the devastating power of the evil one.

And finally, in our passage this morning, Jesus will pray for our **spiritual purity**.

Stand and Read Scripture

John 17:17-19 (NASB)

¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. ¹⁸ Just as You sent Me into the world, I also sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, so that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

Prayer

I want to remind you that Jesus has the right to be our Great High Priest and to intercede for us, because He will offer His own blood as a perfect sacrifice on the cross in just a few hours after this prayer.

All of the high priests from the Old Testament could only intercede for their people once a year on the day of atonement. Then they would leave the Holy of Holies until the next year. Jesus' death on the cross served as a perfect sacrifice for all time. Jesus is **continuously** interceding for us as He sits at the right hand side of God in Heaven. This is the true Holy of Holies.

BODY:

I. MAKE THEM HOLY.

Verse 17 starts with the word "**Sanctify...**"

In order to make sense of this passage, I would like to start by defining three different words: Imputed, Justification, and Sanctification.

I first want to look at **imputed** because the definition of justification uses the word imputed. Justification is God declaring that all who receive Christ will be righteous, based on Christ's righteousness being **imputed** to the accounts of those who receive Him.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NASB)

21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin in our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

When Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, his sin was **imputed** by all of his descendants. In other words, we inherited his sin. Although we did not commit the original sin, we inherited the sin nature and are found just as guilty as Adam. This is because this sin nature that we imputed caused all of us to sin and fall short of the glory of God.

It is also true that the righteousness, or sinlessness, of Christ is **imputed**, or inherited, to all that believe in him. So His righteousness is considered to be our own even though we were guilty of sin and undeserving. That is because our sins were **imputed** to Christ. He paid the penalty by meeting the demands of justice for our sins.

That is where justification comes in. To justify is to declare righteous, to make one right with God.

Romans 5:18-19 (NASB)

18 So then, as through one offense the result was condemnation to all mankind, so also through one act of righteousness the result was justification of life to all mankind. 19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

We are justified, **declared righteous**, at the moment of our salvation. Justification does not make us righteous, but rather pronounces us righteous. Our righteousness comes from placing our faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. His sacrifice covers our sin, allowing God to see us as perfect and unblemished. Because as believers we are in Christ, God sees Christ's own righteousness when He looks at us. This meets God's demands for perfection; thus, He declares us righteous—He justifies us.

Jesus paid the price for our sins on the cross. Our sins were **imputed** to Christ. That was justification. His righteousness was **imputed** to us. That was **sanctification**. **Sanctification** is kind of a stained glass word. What it essentially means is "separation".

What are we set apart from? **(Pause)** From sin. He's praying that we would be set apart from sin. Hence, He is praying for our purity.

He is praying for our continual separation from sin and increasing godliness. As we are on this journey to get to heaven while we are on earth He prays that we will be more and more sanctified. We will become increasingly more holy in practice (sanctification) as we are in position (justification). He prays according to the Father's will and according to the Spirit's work. It is the Father's will that we be holy; it is the Spirit's work to make us holy, to conform us to holiness; it is the Son's petition that we become holy.

This prayer deals with our human flesh. We have three enemies: the world, the devil, and the flesh. We have already heard about the world, and Jesus prayed that we would be protected from the world. We have heard about the devil, the evil one; and Jesus prayed that we would be protected from the evil one. Here He prays that we will be victorious over the ever-present flesh. Although we are not of the world, we are still in the world with all of its wickedness and sin.

In verse 17 He continued by praying...

John 17:17 (NASB)

17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

So to "**Sanctify them**" God will set them apart from sin and separate them from evil.

The apostles and all believers have been separated from the penalty of sin. Jesus paid the penalty. We are never going to see that penalty. We have been separated from the penalty of sin. One day, when we enter into heaven, His death and resurrection will separate us from the **presence** of sin. Here on earth, we are in need of being separated from the **power** of sin. The work of separation from the power of sin is a lifelong progressive work of God.

That is our Lord's prayer, that we who are still sinful are loved by Him with a perfect, heavenly love and that love calls out a prayer for our sanctification. He accepts us in our imperfections and prays for us to become more holy.

And what is the means of that sanctification? Look at the rest of verse 17.

John 17:17 (NASB)

17 Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

Where is the truth found? It is the Bible. The revelation of God written by God's people by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As we immerse ourselves in the Word of God we are in the place where sanctification operates. As we immerse ourselves in the accurate interpretation of the Word of God and apply it in our lives, sanctification takes place by the Holy Spirit.

This is not something mystical. Progressive sanctification, progressive separation from sin, happens as we immerse ourselves in the Word of God. We read it, understand it, embrace it, and love it.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ But we all, with unveiled faces, looking as in a mirror at the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

As you gaze at the revelation of the glory of Christ in the Scripture, that look, that gaze, that preoccupation with Christ, will be used by the Spirit of God to conform you to the very image of Christ, moving you from one level of glory to the next. This is sanctification!

II. SEND THEM INTO THE WORLD.

Why is this important? Look at verse 18. It is important for the very reason that we are in the world.

John 17:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ Just as You sent Me into the world, I also sent them into the world.

It is important because we have a mission to accomplish. And holiness is critical to that mission:

Matthew 5:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ Your light must shine before people in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

In our walk with the Lord we must put the gospel and the power of God on display. If we are going through the world saying, "The Lord changes lives, the Lord transforms sinners, the Lord takes evil people and makes them good," then you are going to reflect that in your life or somebody's going to say, "Why would I believe that?"

Matthew 28:19-20 (NASB)

¹⁹ Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to follow all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

And what is going to make our witness believable is the transformation in our lives.

So our Lord says, "The Father sent Me, the Son, into the world and now I, the Son, am sending you into the world. The Father sent Me into the world in the power of the Spirit. I am sending you into the world in the power of the Spirit. The Father sent Me to display a holy life for His glory in order that His message might be believed. I send you in the power of the Holy Spirit to live a holy life, also to put His glory through the gospel on display." So the objective in sanctification is to be as much like Christ as we can possibly be, that is why we focus on His glory.

III. BE LIKE CHRIST.

Now, in verse 19 Jesus prays something very unusual:

John 17:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, so that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

Does it strike you that there was something Jesus had to do to sanctify Himself? Would it not seem to you that this was something automatic for an absolutely holy, eternal being?

"I sanctify Myself." Why would He sanctify Himself?

There are two reasons. First Jesus had to live a perfect life.

Why?

Because there had to be at least one perfect holy life lived by someone in the history of the world, and He is that only one.

Why is that important?

Because when you put your trust in Jesus Christ, that perfect life is credited to your account. It is as if you lived His life. We read it earlier in...

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NASB)

21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin in our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

That is how we become the righteousness of God in Christ, literally. We have His perfect life credited to us. There had to be a life that could be credited to us and make us acceptable to God. He had to sanctify Himself in perfect holiness, so that that perfect life could be accredited to us by grace.

But, **secondly**, He had to live a perfectly holy life, not only so that it could be imputed to us, but as an **example** to us.

We have His perfect, righteous life imputed to us. That is **justification**. We have His perfect, righteousness characterizing us and that is **sanctification**. His death covers my sin, but His life is also an example of sanctification to me.

So He is not praying about justification here. He is praying about the sanctification process that every believer goes through as we live by the divine truth. He is saying, "I do it Myself so that they will have an example, someone to look to."

Jesus established what sanctification is. He was perfectly obedient to the Father out of perfect love. He loved the Father perfectly, He loved the Father to the full capacity that He has the power as eternal God to love, and he obeyed perfectly. Perfect sanctification is perfect obedience to God's holy will.

John 8:28 (NASB)

28 So Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am, and I do nothing on My own, but I say these things as the Father instructed Me.

That's perfect sanctification. Perfect motive; pure love. Perfect obedience; pure, righteous behavior in every aspect. And our Lord is saying, "I'm sanctifying Myself and putting it on display for their sakes." You want to know what sanctification is? Look at Christ. It is perfect love, operating in perfect obedience.

CONCLUSION:

So what about us?

There is a simple passage in I John that relates to our sanctification.

1 John 2:4-6 (NASB)

⁴The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; ⁵but whoever follows His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: ⁶the one who says that he remains in Him ought, himself also, walk just as He walked.

Walk? What do you mean walk? Walk simply means steady, continual, constant progression against enemies, opposition, odds, and conflict. Walk.

The New Testament is just loaded with the word "walk" describing the Christian life. We are described as walking in new life, walking decently, walking worthily, walking in unity, walking in humility, walking in purity, walking in contentment, walking in faith, walking in good works, walking in separation, walking in love, walking in light, walking in wisdom, walking in truth.

That describes Jesus and that is why John says, "Walk like Jesus".

If you say you are in Him, if you say you abide in Him, then walk like He walked.

Colossians 2:6-7 (NASB)

⁶Therefore, as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, ⁷having been firmly rooted and *now* being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, *and overflowing with gratitude.*

Follow His pattern; follow His life.

We know what sanctification is. It is becoming like Christ. As you look at Him and see His glory, you know exactly how to walk. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength like He did. That is the goal!. Obey the Lord in everything: everything you do, everything you say, and everything you think. Be pleasing to Him.

Yes, He is your righteousness in that you are covered by His holiness in your justification. But He is also your example of righteousness, a pattern to be followed in your walk and in your sanctification. So He not only prays for our purity. He knows that this world is a very difficult world to live in because we have remaining flesh. We are living in a hostile world, the evil one is seeking to devour us. So He prays us into the only means by which this sanctification can take place, and that is by being immersed in the divine Word of God, the Scripture.

As you study the Scripture, you will be walking in the Spirit, and you will be walking the way Christ walked. You will know the Scripture, believe the Scripture, and love the Scripture. That is the path to Christ likeness.

Family of God.