

Rejoice in Jesus Praying For You (John 17:13-16)

Please turn in God's Word to John chapter 17. It's our joy as the family in Christ to listen in on this prayer of Christ for His family of faith and He said in v. 13 this is for our joy to be full. We've been going verse-by-verse thru this gospel, this part has blessed many. It's a special joy for me to have all my siblings in town from out of town and out of state. It reminds me when our family had been living out of the States as missionaries before returning to the U.S. We'd been 4 years in the Philippines and were back on furlough visiting our supporting churches. Our family would sing a missionary song on stage at churches we visited – no, we're not going to sing it today – but at one of those churches, I remember a little old lady – I don't know if my brother or sisters remember her – but she came up to me after the service. I think I'd just finished 5th grade and was already a little taller than this short sweet senior saint, but she looked me in the eyes and said 'Philip I've been praying for you every day since you were here 4 years ago.' That impacted me as much or more than anything I remember said at church all those years

I didn't really know this lady, but knowing she knew me and cared for me and was in daily prayer for me, that really impacted me. At that time in my life I wasn't impacted by much besides sports and Star Wars action figures, but that lady impacted me and ministered to me, not because she was cool, because she was kind with personal care and prayer for me as an individual.

I thought I was cool and tough, becoming a young man, but hearing her say that and knowing she meant it from the heart, I almost started crying on the spot. Years later that still ministers to me, and I have no doubt years later it was a ministry to me still going on, her prayers for me and other dear prayer warriors interceding for me (interceding means praying for another). One of the dynamics I love about this church is there are parents training their kids to talk to older people, there are even older people that love to sit in the kid zone. It's a joy to hear my kids praying for senior saints and it's a joy for us younger believers to hear a veteran prayer warrior of the church say they're praying for us. It's such an encouragement to me as a pastor to know I have faithful personal individual prayers upholding me like the people in the OT who held up the arms of Moses who lacked strength to intercede and lead.

I say all that as we come to John 17 because as impacting and encouraging as it is to know people in church are praying to the Lord for us, how much more to know the Lord Himself in heaven is praying for us! Do you know Jesus personally individually prays for you, not as the world generically?

Jesus prays for His disciples in v. 9 *I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours ...*

Jesus is praying for God's people, not the world randomly, but particularly God's people who v. 8 says received His gospel and believed in Him. And He's not just praying for those disciples, He's praying for future believers, too: ²⁰ *I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me*

If you believe in Jesus, Jesus is praying for you in this chapter. Most of the Bible isn't *directly about* us though it has application *for us*. Jesus speaks to His disciples and there's application for us. Paul writes to NT churches and there's application for modern churches. What's unique about Jn 17 is this is *for future believers directly specifically*. Jesus is asking this for you – you can put your name in v. 20, He prays for _____ who would later believe. It's a comfort and joy to hear others speak their care and prayer for us. How much more to hear Jesus before He goes to the cross and back to His Father:

¹³ *But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves* [*they/them=believers*, He prays for our full joy] ¹⁴ *I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.* ¹⁵ *I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.* ¹⁶ *They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.*

In our text today in v. 13-16 Jesus speaks this prayer to sustain His people with His joy as they live differently than the sinful world around them and face its opposition as a result. I want to consider this text under 2 headings. Our 2nd point will come back to Christ praying for us, so our joy will be full

Our 1st point: Remember Christ and His Word Bring Opposition

American Christianity often forgets this so our joy is often rattled or robbed. But the joy of Jesus in v. 13 is other-worldly joy, not the absence of conflict in a world where everything is going the way we like and everyone likes us. It's in the context of v. 14 where some hate us. It's not enjoying life because all is good, the end of v. 15 is about evil. This is a joy despite the world, the flesh, and the devil. This joy isn't the happiness of the world, it's a holiness by the Word, v. 17, being '*sanctified/set apart*' from the world and not of its worldly values. The sinful world isn't '*us*.' To the degree we're like Christ who is not of the world, v. 14 says they hate us if we're like Him, not them.

[these original apostles saw this fulfilled in the book of Acts]

The world around us still hates us as v. 14 says, because of God's Word He gave us, like what it says about morality and marriage as 1 man + 1 woman.

The world hates that we're not 'of them' in celebrating marriages outside of God's Word, or that we aren't of them slaughtering babies with tax dollars, or sexual revolutions against Scripture, or simply because we're not on the politically correct bandwagon. The world hates us when we speak of sin and salvation in Christ alone. But remember in v. 14 it's not personal ultimately. They hate us because of God's Word and Christ who's not of this world and gives us His Spirit that clashes with theirs. I'm not to love worldly approval, I'm to live different than the world like Jesus offering His transforming love

The implication of v. 14 is Christians are to avoid both worldly assimilation and isolation. We're not to be assimilated into the world's values so all like us because we're so much like them, and we're also not to be isolated from the world, like men who live as hermits, or kids always kept at home, never equipped for the world or engaging it. There's a balance here, as we're not of the world, Jesus repeats in v. 16, but we're to be in the world, as He sends us in v. 18: *As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world*

16:33b ... *In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.* Christ overcame it so all in Him won't be overcome by it. We're sent into the world by Christ to be salt and light. As tempting as it may be to exit the world, we're sent to witness in it, keeping from its evil.
¹⁵ *I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.* NAS footnote 'keep them out of the power of.' NIV has 'protect them from the evil one.' 1 Cor 10:13: *God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.* The way of escape there isn't being taken out of the world, it's the way 'to endure,' to escape sin but not escape tempting. God keeps from sin us as we endure.

In Rev 2-3 we're to hear what Jesus says to the churches about endurance. In Rev 3:10, the same word *keep* is used by the same author on the lips of the same Lord Jesus to the church of Philadelphia, and it helps us see Christ keeping us doesn't mean keep free of tribulation, trials or temptations from Satan. Rev 3:10 *Because you have kept my word about patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial that is coming on the whole world* [same words 'keep...from' and 'world' in Jn 17:15], *to try those who dwell on the earth.* Some *don't* take v. 10 literally as for this ancient church in Rev 3 or a literal *hour* of trial *they* literally experienced. Some think this symbolically means the last days church will be taken out of the world 7 years before the world ends after a great tribulation. I'm not sure Rev 3:10 settles that debate

It *can* be interpreted in literal-historical terms as a 1st century church kept by God from a trial coming on their world, as the church patiently endured persecution. The early church saw things get worse than we've ever seen. In N. Korea and the Middle East the church must feel it can't get worse till the Lord returns. Easter Sunday in Pakistan last week saw dozens of Christians killed by terror. We need to prepare for persecution and pray for persecuted brethren around the world, and I do think v. 10 has application for them and the church before the end. This text *can* relate to the future, but even then it may mean what it means in Jn 17:15: God's people kept through difficulty.

Jesus taught us to pray '*lead us not to temptation but deliver us from evil.*' Not only should we pray for our brethren, Jesus prays for them, for keeping, Jn 17:15: *I do not ask that you take them out of the world but that you keep them from the evil one.* Same Grk verb and preposition, whatever your view of other passages, it's clear from Rev 7 in the 'great tribulation' there will be a vast multitude saved and kept from Satan, of every tribe, tongue and nations in the last days. They'll be kept from God's wrath poured out on the world, some die as martyrs, but God keeps their souls secure from the devil. A hymn says He'll never forsake their soul that all hell endeavors to shake.

2 Thess 3:3 (NIV) '*the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.*' God strengthens, protects us so Satan can't harm us. The Good Shepherd protecting His sheep in His hands none can snatch out of. An even clearer passage is Lk 22 if you want to turn there. Jesus keeping us from the evil one doesn't mean we escape trial or temptation, it doesn't mean we're exempt from tribulation, it means protecting, strengthening in it

Jesus said in Lk 22:31 to Simon Peter the same evening in the upper room:
³¹ *Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat,* ³² *but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.* If I'm Peter, Jesus tells me 'Satan asked me permission to shake you up and down,' I'd say to Jesus 'you told him no, right?' Jesus does let the devil tempt His disciples, but it's to strengthen them, so in turn they can strengthen the brothers. Note Jesus tells Peter in v. 32: *I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail.*

I think this is exactly what Jesus prays in Jn 17:15, keeping them from the evil one destroying their faith, and the key is that Jesus prays for His own. The comfort is not that there's no opposition for me from the world or devil, the comfort is like v. 32: Jesus prays so my faith fails not, so I'll help others.

We know what Jesus prays for as God is answered, because the next phrase says '*And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.*' Not *if* but *when*. The prayer of Jesus is answered, Peter's faith didn't fail, Peter turned back, and strengthened his brothers, and that truth is to strengthen us today.

In Jn 17 Jesus prays for all His followers to be kept in the same way, so our faith will persevere. What's the application for us in tempting, trial? Boice: 'persevere in your work. It is often discouraging; we often see few results. But we will keep at it... We will persevere in our witness. Again we often find this disheartening. Men and women do not want the gospel. They hate the gospel [like Jn 17:14]... Still, we will keep at it, knowing that the same God who is able to keep us in the world is able as well to save some out of it. He may use our witness as one means of doing so. Finally, we persevere with our families. They are a special area of responsibility, and we are often cast down when a son or a daughter or wife or husband will not walk in God's way. Sometimes the situation seems hopeless. But it is not hopeless to God, and therefore we will not allow it to be hopeless for us. We will not give up. We will not quit. God is faithful. He is our keeper [in Jn 17:15]'¹

Closing Application: Rejoice in Jesus Interceding For You

Back in John 17, v. 13 Jesus prays: *...these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves ...* [then v. 15] *I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.*

How do you know if Jesus is praying for you? v. 20 says He's praying these things for all who would believe in Him. If you *don't* believe in Him as your Lord today, if you know nothing of this joy of the Lord, if you're still of the world and know nothing of its opposition toward those living for the Lord, the application for you is not rejoice, it's repent. Renounce all worldly ways, repent of your sins, run to Jesus in faith, rely on Jesus dying, rising for you. If your life isn't right with the Lord, the Lord's Supper isn't for you today, let the plates pass as they come around. But the Lord's salvation is for you today, don't let that pass. 1st step of obedience, Acts 2: *repent, be baptized*. If v. 14 *does* describe you, if you're a person *of the Word*, not *of the world*, if you love the Lord and are seeking to live for Him, however imperfect or incomplete you may feel, you can know Jesus is praying for you in v. 13 for His joy to be completed in you. You can know, believer, based on v. 20, the Lord Jesus is praying for you, to keep you in Him, in salvation and His joy. So come to the Lord's Table remembering what He's done *and is still doing for you*. In v. 13 He wants you to rejoice in His praying for you in this text.

Christ interceding (that means praying for) His people isn't just a past tense, here before the cross, this is a preview of the present tense ministry of Jesus

Hebrews 7:25 NAS: *He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.* The Lord is always living and making intercession for all He saves. What keeps us saved isn't us -- God keeps us. I believe in the perseverance of the saints because of the preservation of the Savior. That's the P in TULIP acronym. We don't hold the DAISY flower where the Y stands for 'You can lose your salvation.' We're not like kids with a daisy, saying of God 'He loves me, He loves me not, He loves me...' We have eternal life by eternal love, v. 24-26.

Listen again, Heb 7:25: *He is able also to save **forever** those who draw near to God through Him, **since** He always lives **to make intercession for them.*** The reason we're saved forever is Jesus is always living, interceding for us. Do you realize, believer, what keeps you from the evil one snatching you is Jesus interceding for you always, like Jn 17:15? What brings you safely to glory is what Jesus prays in v. 24 to the Father, that we'd be with Christ in glory and His eternal love. Tyndale Bible Dictionary says the 'intercession of Christ' is the 'theological term for Christ's activity of petitioning God the Father to save, help and sustain people on earth.'² Study Hebrews 2, 4 and 7

The great Puritan theologian John Owen wrote: 'So great and glorious is the work of saving believers unto the utmost, that it is necessary that the Lord Christ should lead a mediator[s] life in heaven, for the perfecting and accomplishment of it ... It is generally acknowledged that sinners could not be saved without the death of Christ; but that believers could not be saved without the life of Christ following it, is not so much considered.'³

One of the reasons we may lack the full joy of John 17:13 is we lack a full understanding of what Jesus is doing for us now in heaven as our Mediator and Advocate. If we don't apprehend that truth, how will we appreciate and rejoice in it? The same John who wrote this and was there in the upper room wrote also in 1 John: '*these things we write to you that your joy may be full ...these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ...*' (1:4, 2:1 NKJV). Part of what should make a believer's joy full is knowing our sin is paid in full and when we sin, we have an Advocate in heaven's court always pleading for us. Last week we rejoiced in resurrection Sunday but let's also rejoice in what Jesus is doing for you now in heaven, not just what He did on earth then.

This morning we remember what Christ did for us in communion, we do it in remembrance of Him, and it's appropriate we do that with reverence but it's also appropriate we do so with rejoicing. We need to examine ourselves for sin against Christ or His body, but we need to also look beyond us up to Christ our Advocate and Intercessor for our joy. Jn 17 is the night the Lord's Table was instituted by Jesus, and He says here in v. 13 He said these things so His joy will be full in us! At the last Lord's Table I urged you to rejoice, and I couldn't tell from many of your faces if you were, but let me give you more advance notice this time: what Jesus said in the upper room, including what He said about communion, is for the joy of Jesus to be in us to the full.

An old writer named Charles Ross wrote: 'how blessed to know that there is *a Friend in court—an Intercessor...!* For what is Jesus now doing at the right hand of God? Pleading with a continuous, ceaseless, special intercession for his own. Does sin plead loud against you? The blood of Jesus pleads louder still. Does Satan stand at your right hand to accuse you? Your Advocate stands at God's right hand to plead for you. And Jesus is an Advocate that never lost, and never will lose any case committed to his care: '*If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.*'⁴

An old hymn says in 'manifold temptation, My soul holds on its course,
Christ's mighty intercession Alone is my resource;
... 'Twas God's most gracious favor, That gave His Son to die,
To live our Intercessor, To plead for us on high.'⁵

J.C. Ryle: 'This special intercession of the Lord Jesus is one of the grand secrets of the believer's safety... They never perish, because He never ceases to pray for them, and His prayer must prevail. They stand and persevere to the end, not because of their own strength and goodness, but because Jesus intercedes for them.'... Peter fell, but repented and was restored, the reason of the difference lay under those words [Lk 22:32]...'⁶

Peter was too weak to stay awake in the garden to pray for Jesus in John 18, but the Lord who keeps us never slumbers or sleeps, He keeps praying Jn 17

For me it was in the garden He prayed [to God]: "Not My will but Thine";
He had no tears for His own griefs, But sweat drops of blood for mine.
How marvelous! how wonderful! And my song shall ever be:
How marvelous! how wonderful Is my Saviour's love to me!⁷

So rejoice in Jesus interceding for you in a marvelous and wonderful love!
Stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene. Turn to Rom 5 to close

The end of Rom 4 talks about Christ dying for us and rising for us. Rom 5:2 says as a result we rejoice. But even that is not enough or all we need. You say ‘what could possibly be more than the cross and the empty tomb, isn’t it all we need to be gospel-centered, always looking back to what Jesus did?’

5:10 *For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son [past], **much more, now** that we are [present tense] reconciled, shall we be saved [future tense till heaven] **by his life**.* Christ’s death in the past was essential, but there’s more to salvation. Paul says much more now in the present tense and into the future, we need the living Savior to keep us, as Hebrews says He saves us forever because He always lives to intercede. He’s always at the right hand of the throne of grace helping in time of need.

Rom 8:31 continues with Jesus as our living Advocate, one who’s for us, when he says since *God is for us, who can be against us?* Jesus is Exhibit A that God is for us, because He’s our Advocate, which means the one for us. The greatest proof of God being for us in His love isn’t the death of Jesus in Paul’s argument. You say ‘what could be more than His death?’ Rom 8:34: *Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—**more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.***³⁵ *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* Paul’s answer is no one and nothing, but why? Not just that Jesus died, but *more than that* as risen Savior He’s at the Father’s right hand interceding, present tense, for us

³⁸ *For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels [that includes fallen angels like the evil one, Satan] nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,*³⁹ *nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Think of these words in our closing song: He ever lives and pleads for me, so
 Before the throne of God above I have a strong and perfect plea ...
 When Satan tempts me to despair, and tells me of the guilt within
 Upward I look and see Him there who made an end to all my sin ...
 My name is graven in His hands, My name is written on His heart
 I know that while in heaven He stands, No tongue can bid me thence depart

Let’s pray but before I do I want to give you a moment to start communing with God before we pray and sing and celebrate communion. Let’s pause to thank God for this truth, to rejoice in Christ’s intercession for us in heaven. And as you pray to the Father, Christ praying for you. Let’s take a moment to meditate on this and marvel at this silently, then I’ll pray and we’ll sing.

¹ James M. Boice, *John 13-17*, p. 1292.

² Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 638.

³ John Owen, *An Exposition to the Epistle to the Hebrews* (Philadelphia, 1869), 5:542.

⁴ Charles Ross, *The Inner Sanctuary*, p. 218.

⁵ A.P. Cecil, "Our Great High Priest is Sitting."

⁶ J.C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels*, 4:182-83.

⁷ Charles Gabriel, "My Savior's Love."