

Jesus' High Priestly Prayer—Purity (John 17:13-19)

Although Jesus came into this world to redeem us from our sins, the world did not welcome Him. In fact, the world—the hostile spiritual system of human rebellion against God—maligned, persecuted, and crucified Him. The world stands in opposition to the ways of God. Because Jesus was about to leave this world, He prayed that the Father would protect His disciples who would remain in this world. In this High Priestly Prayer, Jesus prayed that His disciples would experience joy, protection, and sanctification. Their spiritual purity would stand out in a world characterized by sin, self, and spiritual rebellion. Jesus wants His followers to stand out in this world even though the world stands against us.

Because we live in a spiritually hostile world we need the joy of Jesus (17:13).

Jesus prayed for His disciples' joy. Jesus warned that in this world we will experience hardship for our faith, but Jesus is victorious over this world (John 16:33). Therefore, His followers can experience joy in the middle of resistance and persecution.

Jesus expressed His anticipation of returning to the Father in heaven (17:13a).

Jesus looked forward to returning to the glories of heaven (John 17:5). He anticipated the joy of completing His redemptive work, knowing that even in suffering there can be joy (Hebrews 12:2). “Now,” Jesus prayed to the Father, “I am coming to you.” What a glorious reunion that must have been!

Jesus prayed to the Father that the disciples would experience fullness of joy (17:13b).

Although Jesus looked forward to being with the Father in heaven, He was also concerned about the fate of His disciples. He knew that they would endure extreme hardships for His sake. So while Jesus was still “in the world” and knew the pain that this world inflicts on God's people, He prayed that His disciples would experience His own joy, a fullness of joy within them. Within a spiritually hostile world we need the joy of Jesus in our hearts. Jesus promised full joy to those who abide in Him (John 15:11) and to those who pray through Him (John 16:24). An abiding, obedient, prayerful life is the foundation of lasting spiritual joy, the joy of Jesus in our hearts.

Because we live in a spiritually hostile world we need the protection of the Father (17:14-16).

In addition to joy, Jesus prayed for His disciples' protection. Hatred was the word Jesus used to describe the attitude of the world toward His followers. Because the disciples were not a part of this spiritually hostile world they would need divine protection. Jesus prayed for the Father to preserve and protect His disciples.

Because the disciples, like Jesus, were not of the world the world hated them (17:14).

Jesus had faithfully taught and prepared His disciples. He had given them the word, the teachings, that originated in the Father. What Jesus taught was the truth of God. However, God's truth runs counter to the world's ways. Therefore, the world has always stood against the ways of God and God's people. Jesus went so far as to say that the world "hated" His disciples. Just as they wanted to kill Jesus, so the world would hate Jesus' followers enough to kill them. The disciples, Jesus stated, were not a part of the world any more than He was a part of the world. Those who have aligned themselves with God through faith in Jesus Christ no longer identify with the spiritual system of rebellion against God. The world wants us to conform to its nefarious mold, but we as Jesus' followers must conform to the truth of God and His Word.

Because the disciples, like Jesus, were not of the world they needed the Father's protection (17:15-16).

One way in which God might protect His people is to remove us from danger. But Jesus did not pray for the Father to take the disciples out of the world. Neither isolation nor insulation from the world are preferred over infiltration of this world by God's people. Instead of praying for the disciples to be removed from the world, Jesus prayed that the Father would preserve and protect the disciples from the evil one. The phrase "evil one" could be translated as "evil," in the sense of the evil spiritual system of rebellion against God, that is, the world. It's also acceptable to translate the phrase as "evil one," referring to Satan, whom Jesus mentioned twice in the Upper Room Discourse as the Prince of this world, the one who energizes this evil world system (John 14:30; 16:11). Since both Satan and the world are intermeshed, both ideas are feasible simultaneously. Jesus prayed that the Father would protect His disciples from the evil world and the evil one who stands behind this spiritually hostile world system. Again, Jesus repeats the fact that His disciples are not of the world any more than He is of this world. As followers of Jesus, we have a different home, a different spiritually orientation, a different destination. Because the world is hostile to the truth of Jesus Christ, we need God's protection.

**Because we live in a spiritually hostile
world we need the holiness of divine truth (17:17-19).**

Finally, Jesus prayed for His disciples' sanctification. Sanctification means to be set apart from unholiness for God's holy purposes. The disciples would need God's sanctifying work in their lives by which they would grow in spiritual purity even in the middle of a corrupt world.

Jesus prayed to the Father to sanctify the disciples by the word of truth (17:17).

Jesus prayed simply to the Father, "Sanctify them by the truth." The truth of God stands out from the falsehood of the world. Jesus' followers would need to stand out from the world, being set apart from the world by truth. Jesus then states, "Your word is truth." The truth of God is revealed in the Word of God, the Bible. Through the scriptures we discover the life-

changing truth about redemption in Jesus Christ—justification by faith in Jesus and sanctification by submission to the Word. The Word of God points out the way of holiness because God is a holy God. For us to stand out in the world we must be remarkably different from the world. We must live lives of purity. Practical holiness will reflect the holiness of God in an unholy world. That holiness is possible only through the transforming work of God in our lives. The Word of truth must be our constant guide toward a holy, contrasting lifestyle. Truth, absolute truth, is found only in God's Word.

Jesus was sending the disciples into the world just as the Father had sent Him into the world (17:18).

Jesus acknowledged the fact that the Father had sent Him into the world. Jesus came to fulfill God's redemptive plan, a plan that included the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection. Now Jesus was sending His disciples into the world. They, too, would live incarnationally within a hostile world, suffer hardship and persecution, and share the reality of eternal life in Jesus Christ. As followers of Jesus, we cannot hide from the world but must engage the world in the life-altering reality of the cross and the empty tomb. We must be bearers of the good news of Jesus Christ.

Jesus sanctified Himself for His disciples so that they could be sanctified by the truth (17:19).

Jesus "sanctified" Himself for the sake of His disciples. Jesus is the holy Son of God, perfectly set apart from sin and perfectly set apart to fulfill His redemptive purpose. He died for us! He did so in order that we, His followers, might be sanctified, set apart to eternal life and an eternity-oriented purpose. Jesus again indicated that our sanctification comes by way of the truth. Truth separates us from error. The truth about Jesus Christ sets us apart from the world to live holy lives and fulfill God's purpose for our lives. Jesus prayed to the Father that His disciples would experience joy, protection, and sanctification in this spiritually hostile world. He wants His followers to stand out in this world even though the world stands against us.