

**Subject: Christ's Prayer for the Saints**

**Scripture: John 17:13-19**

In this prayer Jesus first of all prays for Himself (vs. 1-5), for the disciples (vs. 6-19), and for all believers (vs. 20-26). He knew that He was soon going to leave this world and His disciples. Jesus prayed for three things: 1) that believers would be sanctified; 2) that we would be unified; and 3) that we would be glorified.

We understand the importance of being saved and being glorified, and we realize the importance of being unified, but somehow we have failed to grasp the importance of being sanctified.

God's eternal plan was to send Jesus into the world to save sinners out of this world.

**Galatians 1:4** *Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.* One day the Lord will take us out of this world, but in the meantime we must live here. We are in the world, but not of the world. We are to be separated from the world. This is what Jesus prayed for. Jesus used the word "sanctify." It means to be set apart for God and a secondary meaning is to be set apart from sin. Both of these go together. You can't be set apart for God unless you are set apart from sin. The Bible uses the word "saints" to describe Christians. Saints are "separated ones."

## **1. THE MEANING OF SANCTIFICATION**

What does it mean to be sanctified? The Bible uses a number of words to describe salvation. One of them is justification and the other is sanctification. Justification describes what God does the moment we first turn from our sins and humble our heart to Jesus as our Lord and Savior. At that moment God declares that we are righteous in His sight. We are immediately and totally justified. Justification is something that God does for us and it can never be undone. People who are justified will also be sanctified. That's something different.

- Sanctification is the lifelong process by which God makes believers more like Christ. It is a process which God controls and in which believers cooperate.

Whereas justification is a one-time event, sanctification is a lifelong process. In justification God does something for us, but in sanctification God is doing something in us. What is He doing? He is separating us from the world and making us different. He is making us more and more like Christ. It is a process that takes place over time. It has ups and downs and it takes effort. When God justifies us, He does everything and we do nothing except believe in Christ. But when God sanctifies us, we cooperate with Him in the process. We can't do it without Him and He won't do it without us. **1 Thessalonians 5:22-23**<sup>22</sup> *Abstain from all appearance of evil.* <sup>23</sup> *And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.* **2 Corinthians 7:1** *Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.*

Sanctification is not optional. **1 Thessalonians 4:3** *For this is the will of God, even your sanctification.* **Hebrews 12:14** *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.* **James 1:27** *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.* **1 Peter 1:15-16**<sup>15</sup> *But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;*<sup>16</sup> *Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.*

The person who is justified will also be sanctified. The sure evidence of God's eternal work of justification is God's daily work of sanctification. We can't see the work of justification, but we can see the work of sanctification.

## **2. THE METHOD OF SANCTIFICATION**

How does God sanctify us? God uses three things to set us apart from sin and for Himself: 1) His Word; 2) the Holy Spirit; and 3) trials and God's discipline. Christ prayed for our sanctification and referred to the pivotal role of God's Word twice (vs. 17, 19).

- **Sanctified by the Word of God**

The process of sanctification begins in the mind and with our thinking. **Romans 12:1-2** <sup>1</sup> *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.* <sup>2</sup> *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.* The Bible will change your life. **Ephesians 4:22-24** <sup>22</sup> *That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;* <sup>23</sup> *And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;* <sup>24</sup> *And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.* In verse 22, we are told to "put off the old man," and in verse 24, we are told to "put on the new man." But how can we do that? We are told in verse 23 to "be renewed in the spirit of your mind." That's the key. **Psalms 1:1-2** <sup>1</sup> *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.* <sup>2</sup> *But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.* **Psalms 119:11** *Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*

In Ephesians Paul uses the image of Christ as the groom and the church as His bride. Jesus will one day be with His bride and He is concerned about her holiness. **Ephesians 5:25-27** <sup>25</sup> *Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;* <sup>26</sup> *That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,* <sup>27</sup> *That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*

- **Sanctified by the Spirit of God**

We know that the Holy Spirit is holy and He lives in us. He wants to live in a clean temple. Many teachers want us to believe that the Holy Spirit's primary job is to make you feel better and make you happy. No, the Holy Spirit is more concerned about holiness than happiness. In the OT, the tabernacle, the altar, and the priests were set apart from God by the holy anointing oil. That was a picture of the Spirit of God. **Galatians 5:16** *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.*

- **Sanctified by the providence of God**

God uses the trials and troubles of life to purify us. **Hebrews 12:9-10** <sup>9</sup> *Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?* <sup>10</sup> *For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his*

*holiness*. Trials, suffering, setbacks, and the chastening of God will make us bitter or better. Whenever we go through trials our question should *not* be how can I get out of this *but* what can I get out of this? God uses those tough times to wean us from the world and make us more like Him. We realize this world is not our home and causes us to press on.

### **3. THE MARKS OF SANCTIFICATION**

What is the evidence that we are being sanctified?

- Joy in spite of worldly opposition (vs. 13-14)

Jesus prayed that His joy would be fulfilled in us. His joy was doing what the Father sent Him to do in spite of the world's rejection and hatred. The source of His joy was in fulfilling the Father's plan and doing the Father's will. In order to fulfill God's plan for our lives we can't live like the world. He has called us to be separate and to be different. Unbelievers look to the world for joy. We find our joy in the Lord, not in the world.

- Holiness in spite of worldly temptation (vs. 15)

Literally, "that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one (Satan)." Jesus taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil (lit., the evil one)." The world lives for pleasure, and Christians also live for pleasure...God's pleasure. We want to please Him and nothing pleases Him more than holiness. One of the most alarming verses in the Bible is **1 John 2:15** *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* If we love the Father, we won't love the world, but if we love the world, we don't love the Father.

- Separation in spite of worldly contact (vs. 16-19)

Just as Jesus was in the world, but not of the world, we are in the world but not of it. We are physically present but we are separate from its ways. Jesus sanctified Himself. Even though Jesus came into this world, lived and ministered in this world, He kept Himself separate from the world. In the same way believers are sent into the world, but we remain separate from it. We make our greatest contribution to this world when we are separate from it. Some churches and groups say that the church must become like the world to impact the world. Just the opposite is true.

Do you see yourself as being separated to God and different from the world?

Is a life of holiness more of a blessing or a burden to you?

What must you do to become more holy and sanctified unto God? Are you willing to do it?