

JOHN 17:6-19
JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS DISCIPLES!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to John chapter 17 as we continue our in-depth study of the Gospel of John.

As we have seen over the last several weeks, John chapters 13 through 16 deal with Jesus' farewell address to His men. He is no longer teaching the crowds of people, but He is focused on the eleven men that God the Father had given to Him. Keep in mind that Judas left before the Passover meal was finished to betray Jesus!

And we have seen that Jesus gave them an example of what a servant of God is to be about as He washed the disciple's feet. That was the job for the lowest of slaves and yet Jesus showed them that the Son of God came and served as an example to them, to us.

We have seen Jesus speak of His departure, that He was going to be put to death. And that was troubling, obviously to His men. So Jesus gives to them words of comfort to show them that He is not going to leave them alone, that God the Father and He will send the Holy Spirit to assist them in the work that is before them.

But, for the Holy Spirit to come, He must go!

He showed them that He alone is the way to God the Father. There is no other way even though man comes up with all kinds of ways to get to heaven.

Not only will the Holy Spirit come and assist them in the work, but the Holy Spirit will guide them in all truth. And how important is that for us today when so many people are distorting the Scriptures to make them say what they want them to say instead of what God has said!

And they did not need to be afraid because they can find peace, not like the worlds peace, which is a fleeting peace, but a peace that is only found in Jesus. We can rest in Him!

We also saw, as they went out the Temple area through the eastern gate, that on these large bronze gates was an olive branch and it is here that Jesus taught them about the vine and the branches. That He is the Vine and if they want to produce fruit they need to be attached to the Vine, to Him. Not only that, but the Vinedresser, God the Father will prune our lives of things that need to be removed and He will lift us up when things are heavy upon us!

Not only that, but we saw how Jesus commands us to love people, even those and especially those who hate us, persecute us. We are to show them the love of God or that Agape love, that unconditional love.

That is why we need the Holy Spirit in our lives, one of the reasons. Because this is not a natural love or human love. This is a supernatural love that comes from God as we surrender our lives to Him!

And there is so much more and that is why we took our time going through those chapters.

And now, as we are in John chapter 17, I believe this is still part of the instructions of Jesus to His men as He is showing them how much He loves them and how important prayer is!

And in this prayer I believe Jesus is acting as our Great High Priest as He intercedes for us!

As we saw in our first study of this chapter last time – ***JESUS PRAYS FOR HIMSELF!***

This morning we will look at – ***JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS MEN!***

And then we will finish up next time looking at – ***JESUS PRAYS FOR ALL BELIEVERS!***

At this point I don't believe Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane, not yet. But He is on His way. And keep in mind that not all His men went with Him to the Garden of Gethsemane. Only Peter, James and John went with Him. But they are all with Him here.

So this is before Jesus separated Himself from the other disciples and He launches into this prayer to God the Father.

Maybe you heard about the Sunday school teacher who came to the pastor with a picture depicting Christ in agonizing prayer in Gethsemane while his disciples slept in the background.

"I showed this picture to my class today," she announced, "and one of the students said, 'That reminds me of Pastor Winger.'"

Naturally, he was quite overwhelmed. While searching for an appropriate comment, he must have failed to catch the twinkle in the teacher's eyes. After he stammered a moment, she asked, *"Want to know why this picture reminded my students of you?"*

"Yes, of course," he said, trying to sound suitably humble.

"Well, Ronnie pointed to the sleeping disciples and said, 'You see, Jesus was praying so long, just like Pastor Winger does, that the disciples fell asleep!'"

Okay, no comments here! We will move on.

In this section where – ***JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS DISCIPLES***; I have broken these verses down into the following main points. They are

TRUE FAITH BELIEVES – JOHN 17:6-8

JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS MEN – JOHN 17:9-10

UNITY IN CHRIST – JOHN 17:11-12

PROTECTION IN THE WORK – JOHN 17:13-16

THE TRUTH SANCTIFIES – JOHN 17:17-19

With that as our background, let's begin reading in John chapter 17, beginning in verse 6 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we look at – ***JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS DISCIPLES!***

JOHN 17

VERSES 6-8

As Jesus prays to God the Father, we see that He is speaking of His disciples, the ones the Father gave to Him, and He is praying for them.

I don't know about you, but that is awesome. That Almighty God is praying for us!

And for these men who are trying to take in all that Jesus has said to them, these must have been encouraging words to them.

Even in all their failures, He encouraged them. And yes, they were faithful many times, but missed the boat on that one at other times. They understood where He was from. And even in all of their failures, Jesus knew that they loved Him, He knew their hearts.

Now, those three plus years of ministry, those years that these men spent with Jesus, what was the focus of His ministry?

Keep in mind that most of the Jews, especially the Jewish religious leaders, had a warped concept of God the Father.

So Jesus “**manifested**” God the Father to them and it is not that Jesus declared these things to His men verbally, but what Jesus is saying here is that He lived it out or He revealed the nature of God in His life, the things that He did, and not necessarily the things that He said. Now I am not saying that Jesus did not verbal teach them, He did. But specifically here the idea is living these things and that is what they were seeing!

Remember in John chapter 14, when Philip asked Jesus to show them God the Father and we are told in John 14:9-11, **“Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, “Show us the Father”? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.”**

In other words, Jesus did not just teach them about God the Father, His character, but He manifested the character of God or displayed it before them as He lived out His life.

And keep in mind when Jesus speaks of God the Father’s **“name”** it is a Jewish way of speaking of the whole character and nature of God, like I have said.

All that the Father is, is embodied in the concept of His name and Jesus displayed that before them in His earthly ministry!

Now for some, they see Jesus as being love, love, love! And it begins with His love and ends with His love. Thus, that is what God the Father must be like as well.

Here’s the thing. You can’t take one aspect of God because that is what you like and leave out the others. When we look at Jesus, and for that matter the entire Godhead, you have to look at the fact that God is holy, He is gracious, He is kind, He is merciful, He is longsuffering, He is patient, He is gentle, He is righteous, and He is just, as well as many other things. Yes, He is love but again, you can’t ignore the other things.

This is the totality of who He is and think about it. If God is only love then everyone would be saved, including Hitler, and child molesters, and murderers and the list can go on.

But if that is true, and it is not, then that would make God unrighteous, unjust. Yes, they all could be saved, but they must repent of their sins and accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

And if you feel that way, that God is just love and none of the other attributes, you will find out one day as you stand before the Judge of all that earth that you are wrong and you will have an eternity to think about it!

In Psalm 9:10 we are told, “**And those who know Your name will put their trust in You; For You, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You.**”

Listen to how The Amplified Bible puts this verse. We are told, “**And they who know Your name [who have experience and acquaintance with Your mercy] will lean on and confidently put their trust in You, for You, Lord, have not forsaken those who seek (inquire of and for) You [on the authority of God’s Word and the right of their necessity]. [Ps 42:1.]**”

What the Psalmist is saying is that He has put His trust in the Lord according to the Word of God. He did not make up a god according to his own heart’s desire, but he came to the true and living God that was based upon the Word of God!

Again, this idea of knowing His name is speaking of the totality of His character, of His nature!

And notice who He did this for. He did it for the men that the Father had given to Him, and these men came out of the world!

As we have seen going through the Gospels, these were not some spiritual giants, but they were average men who loved the Lord and they had good days and bad days, but this world system that they were taken out of, this fallen world system, is going to come against them!

There are a few reasons that the world comes against them and us.

First, to destroy our witness by causing us to do things that would not be right for us to do.

Also, they want to take us away from God by getting us involved in things that are not necessarily evil, but they are a distraction to our walk with God, they keep us away from spending time with Him, from going to church.

And they will persecute us to get us to compromise what we believe!

The world wants to drag us back under its control to destroy us! Please understand that. The world is not for you, it is against you. Jesus is for you, and He loves you and that will never change!

Now let's think about how Jesus not only shared about the Father with His men, but He also lived in such a way that by watching Jesus they were seeing God the Father.

That is what we are to do. Yes, we are to share Jesus verbally with people, but we are also to live in such a way that when people look at our lives, they are seeing what Jesus is all about!

That is what Paul wrote in II Corinthians 3:2-3, "**You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.**"

And notice that the words that Jesus gave to these men they believed. That is why I have called these verses – ***TRUE FAITH BELIEVES!***

Now hear me out on this one. Just because you are obedient to the Word of God doesn't make you a Christian. I know, that is shocking to some of you.

But think about it. Are we saved by our good works?

Not at all. In fact, Paul tells us in Romans 3, “**. . . there is none who does good, no, not one . . . therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.**” Romans 3:12b, 20.

The Law shows us that we are guilty before God and if we are already guilty, we can't become unguilty. We missed the mark of perfection and once that mark is missed, there are no do overs!

Then why do we obey the Word of God?

Very simply, our obedience to the Word of God is the evidence showing that you are saved. That you are a new creation. Not that we are perfect, we are not. But our hearts desire is to do those things that would please the Lord and when we fail, we feel the conviction of God upon our lives. We serve out of love!

Remember what John wrote in I John 2:3-5, “**Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.**”

Now some will say that if you only speak of grace, you are giving people a license to sin. The Law is needed to keep people in line. I am sorry but that is ridiculous!

Spurgeon put it like this, “*Those men who think that God's grace, when fully, fairly, and plainly preached, will lead men into sin, know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm. . . . Shall I hate God because he is kind to me? Shall I curse him because he blesses me? I venture to affirm that very few men reason thus.*”

Absolutely. We obey the Lord because we love Him!

And when John speaks of knowing God here, he uses the Greek word *GINOSKO*.

This Greek word speaks of knowing by experience.

And this is John's point. If you say you know God, that you have fellowship with Him, then you will keep His commandments; you will walk in obedience to Him.

This is not done for salvation, but it is the evidence that we are saved.

Jesus put it this way in John 14:23-24, "... 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me.'"

You see, the more we walk with God, the more we are obedient to Him, the more we will know God, He will reveal Himself to us.

Why won't He reveal Himself to us if we are not obedient?

Because our actions show we don't care to know Him, we have a superficial relationship with Him.

And let me say this. For those who say they know God and yet are living in blatant sin with no conviction, no desire to stop, they are a liar, they don't know God.

Now that may seem harsh, but that is the reality.

You see, they may know of Him but there is no relationship, and the evidence is seen in their actions. There is no transformation that has taken place.

Again, we are not going to be perfect or without sin. But what is the desire of our heart, to obey the Lord or to do our own thing?

Warren Wiersbe put it like this. He wrote,

To "*practice*" sin is to sin consistently and as a way of life. It does not refer to committing an occasional sin.

It is clear that no Christian is sinless (1 John 1:8-10), but God expects a true believer to sin less, not to sin habitually.

Every great personality mentioned in the Bible sinned at one time or another.

Abraham lied about his wife (Gen 12:10-20).

Moses lost his temper and disobeyed God (Num 20:7-13).

Peter denied the Lord three times (Matt 26:69-75).

But sin was not the settled practice of these men. It was an incident in their lives, totally contrary to their normal habits. And when they sinned, they admitted it and asked God to forgive them.

An unsaved person (even if he professes to be a Christian but is a counterfeit) lives a life of habitual sin.

Sin - especially the sin of unbelief - is the normal thing in his life (Eph 2:1-3). He has no divine resources to draw on. His profession of faith, if any, is not real.

This is the distinction in view in 1 John 3:1-10 - a true believer does not live in habitual sin. He may commit sin - an occasional wrong act - but he will not practice sin - make a settled habit of it.

The difference is that a true Christian knows God. A counterfeit Christian may talk about God and get involved in “*religious activities*,” but he does not really know God.

The person who has been “*born of God*” through faith in Christ knows God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And because he knows them, he lives a life of obedience: he does not practice sin.

And hear me out on this. Those who feel that they are a Christian, and are practicing the homosexual lifestyle, they are deceiving themselves. And that goes for anyone who is living in habitual sin, and it really does not even bother them.

Make no mistake about it – ***TRUE FAITH BELIEVES!***

And true faith not only believes but there is the evidence in their lives that they believe!

As we read on, we will see that – ***JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS MEN!***

VERSES 9-10

Now this almost seems out of place, these words that Jesus is saying here. He said that He is not praying for the world. What is that about?

I know, it does seem harsh that Jesus is not praying for the world, in a sense He is ignoring the world. Why would He say that, why would He do that?

First of all, if it does not fit the picture of Jesus then we are not seeing it correctly.

Notice that Jesus is not praying to transform the system.

He is not praying to politically organize to change the system.

What He is praying for are those that the Father has called out of the world's system so that they can save people out of the world's system! He is speaking about His men who will carry on the work when He is gone, when He is taken back up into heaven!

Morgan put it this way, and I believe he is correct in his view. He said, ***“He was praying for the instrument He was creating, through which He would reach the world.”***

And Bruce tells us, *“If he does not pray for the world, it is not because he had no concern for the world; he is, indeed, the Saviour of the world (John 4:42; cf. 3:17; 12:47). But the salvation of the world depends on the witness of those whom the Father has given him ‘out of the world’ (see verses 21, 23), and it is they who need his intercession at this junction.”*

I hope you understand that. You see, it was important for Jesus to pray for these men as they were to carry on the work, as I have said.

And notice in John 17:10 that Jesus tells us that **“. . . I am glorified in them.”**

You see, Jesus does not just want to dwell in or live in the believer, but He wants to be glorified in them.

Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, **“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”**

Just as God the Father is glorified in all that we do so is Jesus!

Morris reminds us, *“Just as the world’s values were all wrong concerning the cross, so were the world’s values all wrong concerning the apostolic band. In them the Son of God, none less, was actually glorified.”*

The problem comes when we glorify ourselves, and there is the danger. If you try to exalt yourself, think you are something special, God will humble you. But if you see yourself as you really are and understand that all you do is because of what Christ has done in you, then He will lift you up and by your actions He is glorified!

That is important, especially in our day when we like to exalt self, receive the praise of men, instead of giving glory to the One who has enabled us to do the things we are doing.

If you don’t think this is a big deal, then just listen to what happened to Herod, a man who refused to give glory to God.

In Acts 12:20-23 we are told, **“Now Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; but they came to him with one accord, and having made Blastus the king’s personal aide their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food by the king’s country. So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, ‘The voice of a god and not of a man!’ Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died. But the word of God grew and multiplied.”**

A good incentive to give glory to the One who deserves it, and even if you refuse, God’s Word will go forth with you or without you!

So we see here that – ***JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS MEN!***

As we read on, we will see that there is – ***UNITY IN CHRIST!***

VERSES 11-12

As you look at these verses you can see that when Jesus is gone, and really as He is arrested and then crucified, the persecution against His men is going to grow.

Because of that we see Jesus praying for His men, that God the Father would watch over them and keep them, protect them.

And we see two things that Jesus is specifically praying for in these two verses.

First of all, He is praying that they would be kept or protected.

And I have spoken a little about this already, but, like I have said, tribulation was ahead for these men and Jesus prays to the Father to keep them, preserve them, protect them as they go through these times and the Father did do that.

And what we see Satan using today is this divide and conquer strategy. Let me show you that this is not new, it was tried and failed in the early church, at least here in Acts chapter 6.

In Acts 6:1 we are told, “**Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.**”

What we see here is that Satan tried to use division to stop the work of God. Listen to what we are told in Acts 5:42, which then leads us into Acts chapter 6 and this problem. We are told, “**And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.**”

So to stop this work of God Satan was going to try to divide and conquer!

Now was this a real problem or a misunderstanding, a perceived problem?

Here is the amazing thing. It doesn't matter because whether it was real or not, there was conflict that was arising from it!

What was this problem?

It was a problem amongst Christians. The Hellenists Jews complained to the Hebrews that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food.

And just so you understand, the *Hebrews* were those Jews more inclined to embrace Jewish culture and they were mostly from Judea.

The *Hellenists* were those Jews more inclined to embrace Greek culture and mostly were from the *Diaspora* or from all over the Roman Empire.

Again, these were all Christians and here came this dispute between them!

The Hebrews felt that they were doing the best that they could do, so they were right.

The Hellenists felt that their widows were not being taken care of, so they were right.

And now you have the perfect storm for conflict, for fights. Again, it can be a real issue or a perceived issue, but for many Christians, they will fight to the death over the fact that they are right.

How did the church handle this?

They told the Hellenists Jews to find seven men who could oversee this ministry, Hellenists Jews! And guess what? The problem was resolved!

But who was right?

It didn't matter because it was not the issue. The issue was unity within the body of Christ!

And that is the second thing that Jesus is praying for regarding His men.

Yes, there were going to be difficult times ahead, persecution, but don't let that divide them up. Work together for the cause of Christ. Be in unity!

Now I do understand that with this prayer of unity, some have taken this to unbiblical conclusions.

Let me be clear on this. Unity is based on truth and apart from truth there can be no unity! And God's Word is truth, not what the world says or how you feel! That is important for us to understand.

I like the way that Tenney put it. He wrote, *"The unity mentioned here is not simply a unity achieved by legislation. It is a unity of nature because it is comparable to that of the Son and the Father."*

Exactly.

Remember what we are told in Psalm 133:1, **"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity!"**

Why is this good; to dwell together in unity?

Because it leads to joy and victory in our lives. Unity is of the Holy Spirit!

Now, when you find divisions, you will see that it will lead to strife and defeat. And guess what? Division is of the Devil!

Make no mistake about it, the devil's goal is to create disunity and strife because he knows they create division. And the result of that is we see that division will destroy families, churches and even nations!

We see this played out for us in Matthew 12:25 as Jesus said, “**... ‘Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.’**”

Let me say this. What God has created or established, Satan wants to divide and conquer.

We see that with the family unit. God has established what marriage is about and what family life is to be about. And Satan comes in and confuses people so much that people don't even know if they are male or female anymore! Children become equals with their parents and often run the house. And we see division within the family!

We see that God has established government and look at how Satan has corrupted our government. And the wickedness with the laws that they passed has caused division within our country!

And within the church, we see so much division and Christians who are unwilling to let things go and be in unity with their brothers and sisters. Divide and conquer is the mantra for Satan!

One writer put it like this. He wrote, *“A church walking in unity with its members is probably the most powerful testimony the church can have, because unity is so contrary to the selfish attitudes and the disunity manifested in the world and by the world.”*

And look at what is happening in churches today! Very sad because it is all about us and it is not about the Lord or others! Divide and conquer!

We are called the body of Christ not the individual pieces of Christ.

Paul said in I Corinthians 12:27, **“Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”**

Yes, we are individuals, just like a husband and wife. But a husband and wife are joined together into one.

And yes, we may be many members in the body of Christ, but we are one body!

Now, in saying that, we need to remember that a body needs to work together for the betterment of the body. But if an arm did what it wanted to do or a leg did what it wanted to do, the body would not function properly. And we see that today, the church many times has become spastic in its movement because people are doing their own thing!

And, in the body of Christ, if disunity occurs, it essentially ceases to be a body and becomes a disjointed group of individuals.

What is Jesus praying for here?

He is praying for – ***UNITY!***

Paul put it like this in Philippians 2:3-4, **“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”**

Unity is based upon how we look upon others. Is it all about us or are we more concerned about others?

On the other end of the spectrum is disunity and that is just thinking more highly of yourself, putting yourself as being more important than others.

Remember what Paul told the Corinthians in I Corinthians 3:3, “**for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?**”

Paul’s point is very simple. Disunity, conflicts, divisions are a sign of carnality! Don’t get mad at me if you are fighting with others, Paul said it through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit!

When you are surrendered to God, when you, like Paul said in Ephesians 4:2-3, “**with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**” there will not be all the divisions and fighting!

You see, when you are walking in the Spirit you will find peace within a church. When people are not walking in the Spirit but are guided by the flesh, you will find conflict, divisions and the like.

Jesus is going to pray for unity more as this chapter closes, so hang in there. This was the passion of Jesus for us, that we would be united together in Him and not fighting or dividing ourselves into our little groups!

Also, Jesus says that He lost no one, except for Judas.

Does that mean that Jesus lost Judas?

Jesus did not lose Judas. In fact, in John 18:9 we are told, “**. . . Of those whom You gave Me I have lost none.**”

So what is going on here?

Jesus did not lose Judas, but he lost himself. He had a choice to make, and Judas choose to reject Christ and follow his own heart's desire!

Now some may wonder if Judas walked away from his salvation when he departed!

No, Judas was never saved. He was a tare amongst the wheat.

In fact, Jesus called him the devil, (John 6:70). Therefore, Judas was never saved and that is why he was not kept!

In fact, John said in I John 2:19, **“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us.”**

You see, he never really was a part of them, and in the end, his true colors were manifested!

And Jesus says that what Judas did was the fulfillment of Scripture. Which means that God knows what is going to happen before it happens, and He has told us. He did not make Judas do what he did, but God knew exactly what would happen!

We see this in Psalm 41:9 and Psalm 109:8. You see, the treachery and treason of Ahithophel against King David was a prophesy of the treachery and treason of Judas against the Son of David.

So we have seen Jesus praying to God the Father about the persecution that they would face and for unity among them.

As we read on, we will see Jesus pray for – ***PROTECTION IN THE WORK!***

VERSES 13-16

Why was the Lord praying in front of His disciples?

To encourage them, to show them that He will continue to intercede for them in heaven before God the Father.

Now if you are anything like me, I don't like conflict, I don't like confrontation, I don't like trouble. Thus, ***“Jesus, why are you not going to take your men out of this world and for that matter why are you not taking me out of the grasp of this wicked worldly system?”***

Because this is where the work is to be done. It is not easy. We face many difficult times just as the early church did. But notice what Jesus prayed for to God the Father, **“... that You should keep them from the evil one.”** John 17:15.

In other words – ***PROTECTION IN THE WORK!***

Please understand that the safest place for us to be is in the will of God doing the work of God. The most dangerous place to be is in a rubber room outside of the will of God!

Let me show you how we can rest upon the promises of God and trust that He will see us through. I am not saying that it will be easy. I am not saying that a person will not be put to death for their faith. What I am saying is that God will see you through those storms and the ultimate way He does that is He brings us home.

We are told,

Actor Jimmy Stewart found comfort in Ps 91. When the United States entered World War II in 1941, Stewart enlisted in the Army Air Corps and prepared to go overseas.

Stewart's father, Alex, choked up when he tried to bid him farewell, so he wrote a note for his son to read en route. After being shipped out, Jimmy read the words his father had been unable to say aloud:

My dear Jim boy. Soon after you read this letter, you will be on your way to the worst sort of danger. Jim, I'm banking on the enclosed copy of the 91st Psalm. The thing that takes the place of fear and worry is the promise of these words. I am staking my faith in these words. I feel sure that God will lead you through this mad experience. I can say no more. I only continue to pray. Goodbye, my dear. God bless you and keep you. I love you more than I can tell you. Dad.

As a veteran of the Spanish-American War, Alex knew the comforting power of Ps 91:3-5 (NIV) for those preparing for battle. **“Surely he will save you from the fowler’s snare . . . You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day.”**

Jimmy Stewart returned home a decorated war hero, unharmed even though his record included 20 combat missions.

During the height of battle, Stewart said he learned to lean on the words of his tattered copy of Ps 91, especially verses 1 and 2, which speak of God as a refuge and fortress.

Upon returning home, he told his father: *“What a promise for an airman. I placed in his hands the squadron I would be leading. And, as the psalmist promised, I felt myself borne up.”*

- Perfect Illustrations for Every Topic and Occasion

God’s Word giving us His promise and resting in those promises!

Remember the story of Daniel during the reign of the Medo-Persian Empire. Darius set Daniel in charge of all the governors and satraps in his kingdom.

They did not appreciate that and so they came up with a plan. They knew that Daniel prayed to the true and living God every day, that he was a good man, and they could not make any charges against him.

So they got Darius to sign a decree that no one was to worship any god except the King for thirty days. And if they did, they would be cast into the lion's den.

Darius did not know that they pulled a fast one on him. And once that decree was signed, it could not be changed, not even by Darius.

Thus, these men catch Daniel praying, as he normally did, to his God, and they bring him before the King so that he could place him in the lion's den! And the King was horrified by what was happening, but he could not change the law that he signed!

And we see the King say to Daniel, before he is thrown in, **“... ‘Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you.’”** Daniel 6:16.

Now I don't believe that Darius really believed the words that he said to Daniel because Darius did not sleep too well that night. And the next morning, we are told what took place, **“And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, ‘Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?’”** Daniel 6:20.

You see, he didn't believe that God saved Daniel, not that He couldn't have but I don't think he believed that the God of Daniel did!

And as he said those words, not expecting to hear anything, we are told, **“... ‘O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you.’”** Daniel 6:21-22.

The safest place for Daniel was inside that lion's den. God took care of him. Now, for the men who got Darius to sign that decree, well, they were not so fortunate. They were tossed into the lion's den and eaten!

Remember what the Lord told Paul when he was in Corinth. Not a safe place to be. Morally speaking it was a toilet! That is how bad it really was. And yet, we are told, **“Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.’ And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.”** Acts 18:9-11.

Why would the Lord tell Paul not to be afraid?

I think the reason is simple, he was afraid.

Paul must have seen the anger of the Jews heating up, the opposition against the work he was doing growing stronger, and he was starting to get fearful.

He was imprisoned in Philippi. Run out of town there in Thessalonica and Berea. He encountered indifference to his message in Athens, and now this.

And as he lay in bed one night, God tells him **“Do not be afraid.”**

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

There had been culture shock in Athens, and now Paul experienced moral shock in Corinth. Its sweat and perfume and grit smothered Paul’s righteous soul, and now he became depressed. Remembering his past experiences, he knew what could happen to him in Corinth, and the apostle, as great a servant of Christ as he was, became discouraged, fearful, insecure. Even though there were some spiritual bright spots in Corinth, he needed a lift.

In the midst of Paul's despondency, God ministered to him through a vision bearing words of refreshment – great words for those who are beginning to wonder if they should give up the battle. When we feel the unrelenting persistence of evil, when we sense that the forces of darkness are sending troops to defeat us, when we feel that our finest hour is about to give way to our lowest, there is an antidote for our hopelessness. What did God tell Paul?

“Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.” (vv. 9-10)

This marvelous message from heaven can bring rejuvenation to our souls.

- R. Kent Hughes, Acts – The Church Afire, p. 240

I like that! And what we see God doing in the life of Paul, He wants to do in our lives as well – encouraging us not to give up but to forge ahead in the work He has called us to do.

We see here that the Lord is encouraging Paul to continue speaking forth the Gospel message for God is with him. And even though the opposition may come against him, they won't succeed in their mission, but God's work will!

And like I have said, what encouraging words for not only Paul, but for each of us – don't be afraid – continue in the work – God is with you – the enemy may try to stop you, but they won't succeed!

Not only are we not to be taken out of the world, but we are also not to become like the world!

In I John 2:15-17 we are told, **“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”**

What is interesting today is that the church wants to be like the world, and it makes no sense. That is not where true joy is found and, in the end, this world will pass away!

Thus, as we don't embrace the things of this world, as the light of God shines upon their darkness, the world reacts by hating us, persecuting us because we are not like them, we don't endorse their sin!

The thing we need to remember, the thing that Jesus warns us about, is they hated Him for standing up for the truth and as His servant, they will also hate us!

And Jesus says that He is not praying for them to be taken out of the world! We are to shine in this dark world as we are representing Him! We are not to isolate ourselves on some island but to be in this world but not of this world!

Also, too often today people develop the heart of a Pharisee, looking down upon others, not wanting to touch them, and yet we have been sent into the world to present the Gospel message, to reach out to people! May we not forget that we are to be in the world, not of it!

Jesus also speaks of a joy they have, and the world does not have!

What is this joy based upon?

His joy speaks of our abiding in Him, that is where our joy comes from and that is where it is based.

Thus, I think you can understand why the world has no joy; they don't know the One who is giving it!

And no matter what the wicked world system, a system that is at war with God throws at us, we see that the Lord will give us – ***PROTECTION IN THE WORK!***

As we read on, we will look at how – ***THE TRUTH SANCTIFIES!***

VERSES 17-19

I believe that Jesus is speaking of the sanctification process here.

Why do I say that?

Because the world hates us because we stand up for God, we expose their sin by just shinning for Jesus!

You see, this word, “**sanctify**” speaks of being set apart for God's special pleasure and use. It speaks of being holy, being set apart from the corruption of the world, which seems to be getting worse and worse!

And think about this. The religions of the world tell you how to live, what to do and what not to do. But that is all they can do.

Christianity is much, much different. Jesus didn't just tell us how to live, what to do and what not to do and let the disciples and ultimately us sanctify ourselves.

No, He didn't do that. He prayed for their sanctification! Yes, we must submit but God, and by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our lives, He gives us the power to live holy lives.

And please understand that true sanctification comes through the Word of God.

What do I mean by that?

Remember that Jesus said in John 15:3, “**You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.**”

Make no mistake about it, the more you grow in the Lord the less you love sin and the more you love God! You want to serve Him and be a blessing to others. And all this comes through His Word taken into our lives!

We are sanctified or set apart by the truth of God found in the Word of God as we read it, hear it, and apply it to our lives.

Remember what Proverbs 23:7 says, “**For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. . . .**”

And guess what! Satan knows that if he can control your thinking, he can control you.

Thus, all the pornography on television, in the movies, the words you hear on the radio or through music. The way people dress. The push for all kinds of sexual immorality. He gets your mind focused on those things, thinking on those things, and before you know it, you are doing those things or endorsing those things!

Look at what has happened with our children as they have been taught that you can be a boy or a girl or whatever you want. Even a cat or dog. It is not what God has made you, it is what you have made yourself and as much as adults are confused, we have brought that confusion to our children as well. He wants to control their minds also!

In saying that, listen to what the Bible has to say regarding our minds. How important it is what you are focused upon, what you are filling your mind with.

In Colossians 3:2 Paul wrote, “**Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.**”

You see, don't set your mind on the wicked things of this world, focus your mind on the things of God and what you fill your mind with will be manifested in your life!

In Philippians 2:5 we are told, “**Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.**”

What was the mind of Christ filled with? Holy things, pure things and Paul is saying that we need to have our mind focused on the things that Jesus was focused upon!

And in Romans 12:2 Paul wrote, “**And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.**”

In other words. Don't let the world put you in their mold and shape you into what they want you to be.

Let the Word of God opened up to you by the Spirit of God transform your mind! And this transformation by the renewing of your mind will only take place if you continually fill your mind with the Word of God, which Jesus says is *TRUTH!*

God's Word sets us free from the lies of this world and as you fill your mind with the things of God you will begin to think like He thinks, and you stop thinking like the world thinks!

And in this process, you are being transformed from the inside out or what God is doing on the inside of you will overflow in your words and deeds!

In Ephesians 5:26 we are told, “**that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word.**”

Thus, what God has given to us we are to go out into the world and give to others, share Christ with them! But keep in mind that this work of service is sandwiched by sanctification.

And let me say this. God's truth is given to us four ways.

First of all, His Word is truth, which we see here in John 17:17.

We are also told that His Son is truth, in John 14:6.

And we are also told that the Spirit is truth, I John 5:6.

And God the Father is truth, John 8:26.

We can trust the Lord; we can trust His Word because it is the truth. We don't have to guess what truth is or what is false in the Bible. It is truth, and God does not lie!

One more point and that is found in verse 19 where Jesus says, "**And for their sakes I sanctify Myself.**"

Is Jesus saying He was unclean?

No, for if He was then He could not be that perfect sacrifice for our sins.

Then what is He saying?

I believe He is saying that "*I offer myself in sacrifice.*" He set Himself apart for the work that the Father sent Him to do!

So we have seen that – ***TRUE FAITH BELIEVES!***

And the wonderful words of Jesus, that – ***JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS MEN!***

Because of all that Jesus has done there should be – ***UNITY IN CHRIST!***

And I know the work is tough and sometimes dangerous, but we also see Jesus give to us – ***PROTECTION IN THE WORK!***

And as wicked and dangerous as this world is, we don't have to conform to its wickedness because – ***THE TRUTH SANCTIFIES!***

We will finish up this section next time, this prayer of Jesus as we will see that Jesus is going to pray for the church. He is going to pray for you and me, ***JESUS PRAYS FOR ALL BELIEVERS!***