

66. Jesus Prayed for His Disciples

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others that it was the Father who sent Jesus to be the Savior of the world. We also saw that as Jesus prayed to the Father He told the Him that the disciples He had given to Him had received Him. In our topic today, we will see that as Jesus prepared to go to the cross, He prayed several things for His disciples.

We see that much of the prayer that Jesus prayed to the Father just before He was betrayed was for His disciples. Jesus prayed that the Father would cause the disciples to be one. John 17:9-12 says, “I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as *We are*. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.” Jesus showed His great love for the disciples as He prayed for them.

At this critical time in His life, Jesus chose to pray for His disciples in contrast to praying for the world. Instead, Jesus wanted to focus His prayer on the disciples that the Father had given to Him. In this prayer, we see that Jesus mentioned several things about this relationship with the disciples. The disciples had been given to Jesus by the Father. The disciples belonged to the Father. All that belonged to Jesus also belonged to the Father. In the same way, all that belonged to the Father belonged to Jesus. Jesus said that He was glorified in the disciples. 2 Thessalonians 3:1 says, “Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run *swiftly* and be glorified, just as *it is* with you.” Jesus is glorified as His Word is shared and works in the lives of others.

Jesus then prayed for the disciples because they would be left in the world when Jesus returned to the Father. Jesus asked the Father to keep through His name those that He had given to Jesus. Jesus had told the disciples earlier that evening in John 15:18, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you.” Jesus prayed for the disciples because He knew that the hatred that the world would direct toward Him that night would be directed toward the disciples when He returned to heaven. Isaiah 26:3 says, “You will keep *him* in perfect peace, *whose* mind *is* stayed *on You*, because he trusts in You.” Jesus wanted the disciples to experience that perfect peace. That is why Jesus had also said earlier that evening in John 14:27, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” Jesus wanted the disciples to experience His peace.

Jesus then prayed that the disciples would be one even as He and the Father are one. Jesus had told the disciples in John 10:30, “I and *My* Father are one.” Now Jesus prayed that the disciples would experience this same unity in their relationship with one another. A few moments later, Jesus prayed that same thing for all who would believe in Him in the future. John 17:20-23 says, “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that

the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.”

Jesus had told the disciples earlier that evening in John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” In these verses, we see that it is this love and oneness that causes the world to recognize that we are disciples of Jesus. This also brings glory to Jesus when the world sees that oneness.

Jesus said that He had kept the disciples in the Father while He was in the world. John 6:39 says, “This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.” Jesus had said that it was the will of the Father that He would lose nothing. That is also why Jesus said in John 6:70-71, “Jesus answered them, ‘Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?’ He spoke of Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.” Now Jesus told the Father that He had kept all those that the Father had given Him. Although Judas was one of the twelve to fulfill the Scripture, he was not one of the ones that the Father had given to Jesus because he had a devil.

Jesus went on to say in John 17:13-16, “But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. 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. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.” Jesus was returning to the Father. However, Jesus wanted His joy to be fulfilled in the disciples. Jesus prayed that the disciples would experience this joy because He knew that the disciples would soon experience much hatred from the very men that would condemn Jesus that night. The disciples did experience that joy because Acts 5:41 says, “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.” Truly, that prayer of Jesus was answered.

Jesus had spent much of His public ministry teaching the disciples. Even when He spoke to the crowds, the disciples were with Him and were learning how to teach that same message from the example of Jesus. Jesus had given them the Word and that is why the disciples would soon experience the hatred of the world as they taught the things that Jesus had taught them. That would happen because the disciples were no longer of the world. Peter later wrote in 1 Peter 2:9-10, “But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” Like the disciples, all true followers of Jesus have been called out of darkness into His marvelous light and are no longer of the world.

Jesus did not pray that the Father would take the disciples out of the world. Instead, Jesus asked the Father to protect the disciples from the evil one while they were in the world. The disciples

would be in the world but would not be of the world. Peter went on to explain this fact in 1 Peter 2:11-12 where we read, “Beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.” Once we become Christians, we temporarily continue to live in the world but our eternal home is in heaven. At the same time, we have been set free from the bondage of sin and so we are no longer to live like the world. That is why we are not of the world and its sinful lusts.

Then, Jesus prayed for the disciples in John 17:17-19, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.” The word translated “sanctify” means *to set apart from evil and dedicate to God*. Here, we see in His prayer that Jesus asked the Father to separate the disciples from evil by helping them learn to put the Word of God into practice in their lives moment-by-moment. Jesus also said that the Word of God is truth. This is a key for our own lives. As we learn to yield to the Holy Spirit moment by moment, we will see that the Holy Spirit will give us understanding and wisdom from the Word of God so that the Word also sanctifies and transforms our lives.

Christ said that the Father had sent Him into the world. Jesus was now sending His disciples into the world to share the Word that He had both taught them and showed them how to obey, as they imitated Him. Jesus looked forward to the fact that His disciples and other followers would bring about transformation in the lives of people throughout the world. Acts 17:6 says, “But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, ‘These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.’ Those who were not Christians recognized that the Christians were turning their world upside down.

Jesus had provided the disciples with a perfect example because of the fact that He was without sin and was fully dedicated to doing the will of the Father. The disciples had the same desire for their lives. The apostles told the Jewish religious leaders in Acts 5:29, “But Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said: ‘We ought to obey God rather than men.’” The apostles had been so transformed by the example and teaching of Jesus that they were bold as they spoke to the very men who had condemned Jesus to death. This was possible because they were depending on the power of the Holy Spirit and not their own strength as they spoke to these religious leaders.

We also want to see our physical and spiritual children transformed as they apply the Word of God to their lives and depend on the Holy Spirit to give them the power to speak the Word of God with boldness and follow the example of Jesus. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to develop transformed lives.