

CALLED FOR THE WORLD'S BELIEF

DEVOTIONAL READING: 1 Timothy 2:1-7a
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: John 17:14-24
TODAY'S SCRIPTURE: John 17:14-24

I. Different like Jesus John 17:14-19

14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

14a. This phrase summarizes Jesus' ministry to this point. God's *word* is the truth that Jesus has been teaching. In John's Gospel, this message focused particularly on God's revelation in Christ (John 1:14). He is superior to any other revelation, including the teachings of Moses (example: 1:17-18) and John the Baptist (example: 3:27-30).

14b. God loves *the world*—so much so that He gave His only Son so that believers could receive eternal life (John

3:15-16). Yet this love was and is largely unrequited, as the majority of people *hated* Jesus and those who believe in Him (3:17-21). All people are called to make a decision about Christ. Those who do not accept Him place themselves in the same category as the Pharisees, chief priests, and others who actively persecuted Jesus. There is no middle ground.

Knowing the truth about God is a great blessing, but it comes with a cost. Although the disciples had not been persecuted directly thus far, they were with Jesus on several occasions when His life was in peril (see John 7:1, 30; 8:58-59; 11:45-54). As the church was established and Christianity began to spread throughout the Roman world, persecution became a universal experience.

14c. The cause of the world's hatred for Jesus and His followers is stated in terms of group membership or identification: it is *because they are not of this world*. Their whole set of values was different (Ephesians 2:1-10).

Jesus had come down from the Father (John 3:13, 31-36) and was about to return to Heaven (13:33; 16:28). Unlike Christ, the disciples were human beings, made up of both human flesh and human spirit as all of this world are. But the disciples had been "born again" (3:3). Therefore, they were no longer

recognized as family by the disbelieving world. The disciples had made themselves outsiders, citizens of Heaven who temporarily resided in a foreign land as unwelcome noncitizens (1 Peter 2:11).

15. The disciples wanted to be wherever Jesus was. But they could not accompany Jesus in leaving *the world*, no matter how bad things became. They needed to remain because they would be the vehicle through which others could hear the good news and receive salvation.

Jesus did ask, however, that they be *kept from the evil*—that is, the devil. Satan works through worldly people to intensify persecution and suffering in an effort to silence godly witnesses. This divine protection did indeed come, but not in the form of stopping the sources of pain. Rather, it came by the strength of the Holy Spirit to endure (John 14:16, 25-27).

16. Taken as something of a unit, John 17:14-16 explains why Christians suffer, sometimes even to the point of death. In the early centuries of the church, passages such as this were used to support the argument that people who experience martyrdom receive special eternal blessings.

Jesus' statements should be taken not as abstract principles but rather as prophecies of realities. The original readers of this Gospel came to know persecution firsthand. Many believers today live in cultures where their faith is not legally protected; they experience persecution as a result. But we should not conclude from these verses either that (1) true believers will *only* experience persecution or that (2) *only* true believers will experience persecution. Jesus' larger point is that we should be prepared to continue to witness, no matter what. And the key to being able to do so is to focus on the fact that we are *not of the world*.

17. The Greek verb translated *sanctify* means "to make holy or set apart." Things in the ancient world that were set apart were often found in temples or other sacred places. Jesus, however, asked God to sanctify the disciples themselves. It was through their knowledge of *truth* that this sanctification would come. Such knowledge concerned faith in Jesus. Jesus himself was and is both the *truth* (John 14:6) and the one who proclaimed the word of truth about God to the world (8:31-32). Jesus' life and words revealed God perfectly (14:9). Those who abandon falsehood to accept Christ and His words are set apart by their faith.

We can note in passing that sanctification has two aspects or phases. The first is the onetime event when an unbeliever joins the ranks of the saved (see 1 Corinthians 6:11); this may be called *initial sanctification*. The second phase can be termed *progressive sanctification* since it is a continuing transformation (2 Peter 3:18; 1 John 3:3).

18. These words shed further light on the mission of the disciples and the church. Jesus had been *sent* from Heaven to testify about God to a hostile *world* (John 1:10-11; 5:23-24, 36-38; 8:42-47). Jesus handed this mission on to His apostles, who were then *sent* in turn *into the world* to testify. The fact that the apostles were sent by Jesus provided them with a unique authority.

19. Because Christ is God incarnate, in one sense He is sanctified just by definition. Jesus, however, was likely referring to the example of holy living that He set before the disciples throughout His ministry. Jesus is consistently portrayed as consumed by a desire to do anything and everything that God has called Him to do. Indeed, Jesus' very sustenance was "to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4:34).

II. United as One

John 17:20-24

20 Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

21 That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

22 And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:

23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

24 Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

20. This verse extends the scope of Jesus' commission to include all believers in all times and places.

21a. Unity is essential to Jesus' vision for the church. His prayer for future followers is tied to a statement about His own identity: Christ and the *Father* are *one*, and therefore believers should be united as *one*.

The focus here is less on Christ's identity with the Father as members of the Trinity and more on the notion that Jesus always acts in a way that shows that He is united with God in essence and purpose. Seeing Jesus is equivalent to seeing the Father (John 14:9-12).

21b. The goal of the disciples' unity is effective witness, the result of which will be others drawn to Christ.

22a. *Glory* here refers to God's divine nature and attributes. Christ and the

Father are one by their very nature (Hebrews 1:3). Jesus has illustrated this by doing and saying exactly what God the Father desired. Now He passes that glory along to all present and future disciples (*them*).

22b. Unity is described here as a result of the gift of John 17:21a. Elsewhere, unity is a command. The Farewell Address began with Jesus' washing the disciples' feet and telling them to follow His example in serving one another (John 13:2-17). Jesus also commanded three times that believers love one another as Jesus himself loved them (13:14; 15:12, 17).

In Jesus' view, even the most hostile opponents of the faith should be struck by the love and unity that prevails among His followers. The love of the disciples is to continue as a sign to an unbelieving world about the good news of Jesus Christ.

23. The church's unity must be *perfect* in the sense that it lacks nothing. But we know that unbreakable unity is not typically experienced anywhere. Yet this is the very reason why it can serve as supernatural evidence of the nature of Jesus.

Unity can only attract *the world* if it is more than superficial. It must rise to the level of an unwavering commitment to God and His church. When broken people are redeemed, brought together by God, and united in a common purpose, unbelievers must conclude that something special is happening!

24. Jesus has already told His disciples that He was returning to Heaven and that He would prepare a place for them there (John 14:1-3). Once we arrive there, we will *behold* Christ's *glory* in the sense that we will witness what Jesus has been claiming to be true about His relationship with the Father. The full extent the Father's love for the Son will then be clearest.

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

CALLED FOR THE WORLD'S BELIEF

Into the Lesson

Consider the following professions:

Attorney
Elected Official
Union Negotiator
Real Estate Agent

Describe what these professions might have in common

Today's lesson will look at one of Jesus' most important prayers.

Into Life

What can we include in our prayers to make them more like today's prayer of Jesus?

Compose a prayer that includes some of these elements.

Into the Word

Read John 17:14-24 and complete the following chart.

Verse Reference	What Jesus Prayed For
John 17:15	
John 17:17	
John 17:20-23	
John 17:21	
John 17:24	

Circle the adjective[s] that you would choose to describe the prayer of Jesus.

surprising / inspiring / comforting / challenging / unattainable / difficult

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Christians are one in Christ Jesus.