

The Church of the Servant King

Survey of the Bible Series – The Gospel of John (SB_JN17C_The Real Lord’s Prayer_Continued)

A Verse-by-Verse Analysis of 17:11b-19 – Jesus’ Prayer for His Disciples

Verse 11b – As we noted in the previous lesson, it is important to note that in the middle section of this chapter which consists of verses 6-19, Jesus is praying for His disciples, specifically His apostles. Jesus spends the first half of this section (vv. 6-11a) describing the reason for His request on behalf of the disciples. The focus of this study is the second half of this section (vv. 11b-19) which is focused upon His request of the Father that the Father will enable their faith to survive in the midst of a hostile world.

“Holy Father, keep through Your Name, those whom You have given Me that they may be one as We are.” (17:11b)

Two important concepts: There are two important concepts that we will examine from this verse: 1) Jesus’ meaning of the phrase “keep through Your name” and 2) the meaning of the phrase “that they may be one as We are.” The word for “keep” here is the same as the Greek word used earlier in the chapter (see verse 6b) – *τηρειομαι*. As noted in the previous lesson, this word has a variety of meanings including “to keep watch over, guard someone or something, to not lose, to protect, to observe, fulfill, pay attention to.”¹ In this verse it carries the connotation of protection from harm.

The meaning of “through Your Name:” The prepositional phrase “through Your Name” that is used by Jesus here carries the same meaning as when used earlier in verse 6a. As we noted in that verse, the name of God manifests His essence (Ex 3:13-15; Isa 52:6) and is a theme that is repeated in the Old Testament (Isa 59:19; 66:19; Psa 113:3). When Jesus uses the phrase “keep through Your name” in His request, He is asking the Father to exercise His sovereign power on their behalf in a manner consistent with His essence.² The focus is upon God’s character as the basis for their protection, not their loyalty to Him as a basis for their protection. Of course, the disciples would forsake Jesus before they eventually became leaders, but unless God had worked in their lives in the interest of His Own essence, the pressure of the cosmos could have overwhelmed them.

Satan’s trump card in his cosmic system is religion and it is religion that posed the greatest opposition to Jesus during His public ministry. Therefore, consistent with God’s essence in the context of the angelic conflict, which essence requires that humans be able to exercise free will, Jesus requests that God act to protect the apostles from Satan’s cosmic system.

Further support for interpreting “through Your Name” in this manner: A consistent theme throughout Jesus’ instruction and prayer on behalf of His disciples in John 13:31-17:26 has been a repeated acknowledgment by Jesus that the disciples had believed in Who Jesus claimed to be

¹ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1957, 1979), 814-15.

² Gary Derickson and Earl Radmacher, *The Disciplemaker, What Matters Most to Jesus* (Salem, Oregon: Charis Press, 2001), 277. The authors note that “the preposition He uses can mean either ‘in,’ in the sense of location or sphere (the *locative* case), or ‘through’ (‘by means of’) in the sense of agency (*instrumental* case). If it were the first sense, then Jesus is praying that the Father will keep them loyal to Him as a necessary element to their unity. The second use of ‘in,’ to indicate agency, focuses on God’s character as the basis of their protection.” This is a good example of where a decision about the choice of Greek syntax is open to one’s interpretative paradigm. The construction of the Greek word is the same for either case in the Greek.

– the manifestation of the Father as the Son of God (e.g. 13:31; 14:1, 7, 9-11; 17:6-8). Embodied in this theme is the understanding of the unity of essence possessed by the members of the Triune Godhead. Just as the Son had manifested the essence of God, so too, the apostles should manifest the essence of God in their lives.

The relationship between God's essence and unity: Essential to manifesting the essence of God as a body of faith was for that faith to create unity among the believers. This too is a theme in Jesus' instruction and prayer on behalf of His disciples in John 13:31-17:26. For instance, reflect upon our study of John 15. We see that theme of unity among the disciples (and by application to all believers) emerge again in verse 11 of our passage.

Summary: So, in verse 11b, Jesus is praying that the Father would protect Jesus' apostles on the basis of the integrity of God's essence so that they would manifest unity. As Jesus taught His disciples in chapter 15, verse 6, the world would disregard their testimony if they did not abide in Christ – the vine. Only by keeping Jesus' commandments to abide in Him could the disciples manifest the unity necessary for all to know that they were His disciples (13:35).

From what did the disciples need God's protection? What danger threatened the disciples? I believe that Jesus was praying here for protection from disunity since the issue of unity is integral to this passage and recurs as a theme throughout Jesus' instruction of His disciples on the night prior to His crucifixion. This understanding is also consistent with Jesus' instruction of His disciples in how to pray that is recorded in Matthew 6:13 – “And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” – and in Jesus' requests in the verses to follow – “keep them from the evil one” (17:15). Jesus' words in Luke 22:32 reconciles well with this understanding also – “Satan has desired to have you.” “Thus Jesus is most likely praying for the Father's involvement in protecting them from Satan's schemes [the cosmos] to weaken them through division.”³

What type of unity was it to which Jesus referred? There is unity that is related to each of the three phases of the believer's existence – positional or “essential” unity (phase 1); experiential or “existential” unity (phase 2); and eschatological unity (phase 3).⁴ The unity within the Godhead cannot be fully duplicated by believers since we cannot share in all of the essence attributes in time. For instance, believers will never share in a co-equal fashion God's essence attributes of sovereignty or omniscience even though we may participate or benefit from them. However, just as the members of the Godhead have a perfect unity of love, of purpose, of holiness, and of truth, so too Jesus prays that believers (specifically the apostles in context) reflect a similar oneness of love, purpose, holiness and truth. Just as the members of the Godhead experience perfect communion, so too the disciples could experience communion or fellowship with each other. So, Jesus is praying that the disciples or apostles demonstrate an experiential unity in their phase 2 existence.

³ Ibid, 278. Satan is far too powerful a foe for mere humans to battle directly and he is not omnipresent so that he could engage in direct spiritual battle with humans across the globe on a simultaneous basis. Rather, consistent with the parameters God established for the angelic conflict, I believe that Biblical references to human believers engaged in conflict with Satan, with few exceptions, should be understood to be references to Satan's system or philosophical infrastructure that is designed to deceive man into believing that man is capable of attaining a divine-like or righteous status apart from any need for a personal Savior. This philosophical system of deception is rooted in Satan's original sin – the arrogant belief that he could become like the most high God.

⁴ Derickson and Radmacher, *The Disciplemaker*, 279 use the terms “essential” to refer to our oneness in Christ; the term “existential” to refer to the fact that “we need to go on being what we are;” and the term eschatological our future state. Conceptually, these terms are related to the three phases of the believer's existence as I've related them here.

Paul builds on Jesus' desire for unity among His apostles in His teaching to the Church. As such, we see one of the similarities of spiritual truth that transcends dispensations.

That there should be **no schism** in the body, but that the members should have the **same care for one another**. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. (1 Cor 12:25-26)

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. Be kindly affectionate to **one another** with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to **one another**; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. **Be of the same mind** toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord.*" Therefore, "*if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.*" Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom 12:9-21)

Verse 12 – This verse introduces some interesting questions to which everyone who has studied with me for any time should be able to provide an answer with confidence. Did the fact that OT Scripture (e.g. Psa 41:9; 69:25; 109:6-8)⁵ prophesied (albeit indirectly) a betrayer of the Messiah dictate that Judas would sin and be lost? Or, did Scripture just reflect what the omniscience of God knew in advance of Judas' decisions? As you are undoubtedly aware by now, one's answer reflects the extent to which one's interpretive paradigm has been influenced by Calvinistic or Reformed concepts.

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. (Jn 17:12)

An analysis of the Greek prepositional phrase: The NKJV quoted above translates the Greek prepositional phrase differently that was used previously in verse 11b. The only difference is that a different syntax is applied to the Greek word for kept – *taσtreoσ* in the two verses. Consider the following:

(Jn 17:11b) "keep **through** Your name those" (NKJV)

(Jn 17:12) "I kept them **in** Your name" (NKJV)

⁵ "Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me" (Psa 41:9).

"Let their dwelling place be desolate; let no one live in their tents" (Psa 69:25).

"Set a wicked man over him, and let an accuser stand at his right hand. When he is judged, let him be found guilty, and let his prayer become sin. Let his days be few, and let another take his office" (Psa 109:6-8).

Even to the untrained eye, it is readily apparent that the only difference between the two phrases in the Greek is the different syntax for the Greek word for keep - *ta phero*. However, our focus is upon the prepositional phrase. Note that the same Greek preposition is translated in two different ways in the NKJV.

The meaning of "through Your name" in verse 12: Jesus is stating that He has protected the apostles from Satan's schemes [the cosmos] which would weaken them through division. The idea is that Jesus has protected them in the interest of the Father's name.

Thus Jesus affirms that He protected the men from Satan's attack through the Father's authority and power (His "name") rather than through His own. This again reflects Jesus' commitment to a ministry in dependence on the Father rather than as an independent agent. He has been a perfect model for His disciples. He did nothing on His own initiative, but only what He saw the Father doing (John 5). And He wants to see the Father continue protecting them as He has done through His Son.⁶ [The theme of submission to the authority of the heavenly Father's plan is very prevalent in this chapter as we have seen.]

"None of them is lost except the son of perdition:" When Jesus states that "none of them is lost except the son of perdition," is Jesus admitting a failure to protect those whom the Father had given Him? Does this mean that Judas was a saved person who lost his salvation? How do we answer the critics on these two questions? In order to answer these questions, let's examine several facts.

- ✓ This statement by Jesus cannot refer to a loss of salvation since that would violate Jesus' own words that those the Father has given to Him, He loses none (Jn 10:25-30).
- ✓ The description of Judas as the "son of perdition" implies that he never belonged to God.
- ✓ The title "son of perdition" must be understood in view of Hebrew thinking for when someone is described as a "son of" someone, they are being identified with that person's character or essence.
- ✓ Although Judas was numbered among the apostles and had been exposed to Jesus for years, he had never believed in Jesus.
- ✓ Jesus clearly refers to Judas as lost and not a believer from the earliest days of Jesus' public ministry (Jn 6:64, 70). Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him.
- ✓ As we have observed earlier in this series, Jesus presented Judas with ample opportunity to turn from his path of destructive decisions even during the Last Supper. Jesus knew Judas still had a choice as evidenced by His last appeal to Judas (13:21-26). During this "Last Supper," Jesus followed a custom practiced during the Passover meal that was to be celebrated soon. It was customary for the father as the head of the house to give honored guests pieces of bread or meat dipped in a juice prepared by boiling fruit in wine.⁷ This symbolized the fruit of the Promised Land. If Judas had yielded to the Lord's gracious act toward him, he would have found his ever-hardening heart immediately softened by such a gracious act.
- ✓ Judas made a volitional choice to reject Jesus and to betray Him.
- ✓ The volition of man during this phase of the appeal trial of human history known as the angelic conflict is so essential to the resolution of that trial that God Himself will not violate man's volition.
- ✓ Jesus only lost Judas in the sense that Judas chose to depart from Jesus' protective custody and reject Jesus' offer.

⁶ Derickson and Radmacher, *The Disciplemaker*, 280.

⁷ Darrell L. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002), 496.

- ✓ Thus, Jesus did not fail Judas. Judas made a choice, bartered a price for his betrayal, then Satan entered him.
- ✓ Judas was of the same character as the false teachers in 1 John 2:19 whose departure from the fellowship of the apostles proved they were never of the faith.

Verse 13 – Jesus clearly anticipates His departure in this verse as He turns from the defection of Judas to focus upon the issue at hand. Jesus’ overriding concern is for His disciples and He reminds the heavenly Father that He has been teaching them this night with a specific purpose in mind – that they might have His joy (Jn 15:11; 16:24; 17:13; 1 Jn 1:4).

But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. (Jn 17:13)

Since Jesus has been reviewing the same issues with His Father that He had discussed with the eleven, the reference to “these things” is probably a reference to the whole evenings’ conversation with the apostles. The purpose of that conversation with the apostles was that as they later reflected on all that He had taught them and all of the events that would transpire, they would understand and possess a joy that could not be taken away. Jesus’ reference to speaking in the world is another way of alluding to the fact that He will soon be in heaven and speaking with the heavenly Father face-to-face rather than through prayer.

We need to remember that this whole discourse is of tremendous modeling value to us. Jesus is taking the eleven men from where they are as self-centered, competitive disciples to servants to friends who love each other and display the joy of the Lord.⁸

Verse 14 – There are two important points made by Jesus in this verse: 1) the importance of the Word; and 2) the principle of separation, not isolation from the world.

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. (Jn 17:14)

The importance of the logos: In this verse when Jesus uses the word *logos*, He has His entire teaching ministry of the apostles in view. Also, implied is their reception and retention of that *logos* (17:6) which had the effect of separating them from the world. This separation is not the same as isolation.

Thus they have been given to Jesus “out of the world” (17:6) though they are still “in the world” (17:11) while being “not of the world” (17:14). Jesus is next going to pray some more for them, but not that they be take [sic] out of the world (17:15), but that they be “sent ... into the world” (17:18).⁹

Question: When Jesus spoke of hatred from the world, to which system of cosmic influence would He been making reference according to our terminology – cosmic 1 or cosmic 2?

Question: What does this verse indicate that the believer should expect as a matter of a modus vivendi in this world?

Question: Have you grown enough in your walk as a believer so that your life is characterized by non-compromise with the world’s system of “good?”

⁸ Derickson and Radmacher, *The Disciplemaker*, 283.

⁹ Ibid., 284.

Question: If you evaluated your use of time, your model (i.e. your concept or paradigm) of home life, your model of marital life, your model of celebrating “holidays,” the use of your financial assets, your prayer life, your support of those involved in missions work, your use of time for personal Bible study and meditation, the amount of time you watch TV, the time you spend reading books that have no spiritual value, how would you respond to Jesus if He were to ask you “are you of the world or not?” Remember, Jesus doesn’t accept your self-serving rationalizations and justifications. He (and the Word) is a discerner of our very thoughts and intentions (Heb 4:12).

Verse 15 – Again, in this verse Jesus prays for their protection. However, He uses a prepositional phrase that has caused no small degree of debate.

I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. (Jn 17:15)

Post-tribulationists have used the meaning of the Greek preposition *ek* in this verse to support their interpretation of its use in Revelation 3:10 to be a reference to a preservation of believers through the Tribulation.¹⁰ While worthy of note, the debate is outside the bounds of our study of John 17. So, here in verse 15, was Jesus referring to 1) evil in a general sense; 2) the evil one or Satan in a very specific sense; or 3) the cosmic system of Satan? The confusion over which of these three options is best in this passage involves in part the fact that both the masculine and neuter spelling in Greek for the Greek word for *evil* is the same. In addition, it is preceded by the definite article. This virtually rules out the first option – to interpret “evil” as a reference to evil in a general sense.

So, this leaves us with either option 2 or option 3 as the more viable possibilities. In my opinion, the arguments in favor of option 3 are the strongest – to interpret this word as a reference to the cosmic system for these reasons:

- ✓ The emphasis in Jesus’ prayer is the “world” (mentioned 14 times).
- ✓ No human could stand against the person of Satan and God does not allow Satan to do personal battle against humans.
- ✓ It is Satan’s cosmic system that threatens believers.
- ✓ The most dangerous component of Satan’s cosmic system is religion.
- ✓ If Jesus was praying for their protection from Satan personally, then His prayer was not answered because at least some of them died as martyrs.
- ✓ Another emphasis is separation from the world, not isolation.
- ✓ This meaning is inherent in the Greek preposition *ek* which means “out of” or “from.”
- ✓ Together with the meaning of “keep” which we have noted previously, the sense of Jesus’ prayer is that the apostles be “preserved” or “protected from” the cosmic system in terms of its influence upon them.
- ✓ In this sense, Jesus was requesting that the apostles be preserved through their experience in the cosmos.

Verse 16 - Jesus acknowledges here that the apostles were not a part of the cosmic system.

They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. (17:16)

The apostles are in need of the Father’s protection because they were not of the world system.

Verse 17 – Now, Jesus requests that the apostles be set apart by truth. This is further evidence that separation from the cosmos is the subject and focus of Jesus’ prayer.

¹⁰ For one example of a good analysis of this issue see Jeffrey L. Townsend, “The Rapture in Revelation 3:10,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 137:547 (July, 1980), 252-63.

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your Word is truth. (17:17)

Paul taught a similar type of sanctification (phase 2) in such passages as Ephesians 5:18 and Colossians 3:16. It is a phase 2, experiential sanctification that Jesus has in mind here because He is praying for believers. This is not phase 1, experiential sanctification. Note that it is the Word or truth that sets believers apart from the cosmos.

Verse 18 – Jesus compares His sending of the apostles to God the Father’s sending of Him into the world. However, they would not be alone, but they would have the Holy Spirit sent from Jesus to help them (Jn 15:26-27).

As You have sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. (Jn 17:18)

Verse 19 – Jesus now states the reason for His being set apart – it was for the disciples’ sakes so that they might be set apart. Jesus had His disciples constantly in focus in these last hours of His life.

And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. (Jn 17:19)

- Several points are worthy of emphasis in our analysis of this verse:¹¹
- ✓ When Jesus states “I sanctify Myself,” He is looking at all of His life, not just the upcoming crucifixion.
 - ✓ He uses the gnomic present tense which expresses an action that occurs on a routine basis. Thus, Jesus is viewing His entire life’s practice.
 - ✓ This view that Jesus’ attention was not focused primarily upon the Cross at this time is bolstered by Hebrews 12:2-3 which indicates that Jesus was focused upon the Crown as He approached the cross. Accordingly, His focus was upon the crown for the eleven. His ministry with the disciples was preparing them to reign with Him in the coming kingdom, not instructing them about His death.
 - ✓ Jesus knew that should He have focused upon His death, the disciples too would have focused upon the persecution and martyrdom they were to soon face.
 - ✓ What sustained Jesus was a focus upon “truth” which “truth” involved the coming kingdom and the eleven disciples shared reign in it.
 - ✓ This subject is the focus of all of the overcomer passages in Revelation 2 and 3 which consummate in 3:21. He who overcomes will be rewarded and will reign with Christ.
 - ✓ To accomplish His purpose, Jesus set Himself apart (sanctified Himself).
 - ✓ Jesus sanctified Himself in time through His actions even though He was already holy.
 - ✓ He sanctified Himself through humble submission to the Father’s authority as expressed in His Word.
 - ✓ This submission to the Word of the Father which expressed His plan is illustrated in the wilderness temptations (Matt 4:1-11)
 - ✓ In each of the three instances of temptation by Satan, Jesus responded based upon the Word of the Father and refused to be identified with Satan and his world system.
 - ✓ This submission to the plan of the Father is also illustrated in His cleansing of the temple since what was being practiced there violated God’s revealed will for the Temple (Matt 21:13).
 - ✓ When Jesus stood before the Sanhedrin at His trial and was commanded by the High Priest to tell them if He was the Son of God, Jesus answered on the basis of Daniel 7:13-14 and the promise of the Son of Man receiving dominion from the Ancient of Days.

¹¹ See Derickson and Radmacher’s analysis of this verse in *The Disciplemaker*, 289-90 which was used in part as a basis for the construction of my analysis.

- ✓ In each of these instances (plus countless others), Jesus could have taken a different route and avoided the hostility of the world by not separating Himself from the world's system.
- ✓ However, Jesus had set Himself apart by submission to the Father's plan and authority as expressed in His Word and His Word became the separator between Jesus and the world.
- ✓ The eleven (and all believers by application) are called upon to follow Jesus' example.