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Dedicated to the One I Love

John 17:15-19

Our West Virginia capitol building was dedicated on June 20, 1932. It took eight years to build at a cost of just under 10 million dollars. It is clear the structure was built with a very specific purpose – to provide the space for the operation of our specific form of government. Three branches. A two chamber legislature. Its beauty and grandeur serve a purpose as well. At its dedication the building was specially set aside to serve its purpose. It has done so well for 83 years.

In John 17 Jesus prayed that His followers might be set aside for His Father’s purposes. We can learn a lot about what it means to be a true follower of Jesus Christ and to consistently grow in our relationship with Him when we consider His request: “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth”. We can learn what it means to be truly dedicated to the One we love.

We have been considering what great truth, assurance, and encouragement we find in “The Real Lord’s Prayer”, Jesus’ prayer to His Father recorded for us in John 17. Perhaps the greatest encouragement is that Jesus prayed for us (vs. 20). In our recent studies we have been looking at the specific requests which Jesus prayed for us.

Jesus prayed that we might have joy (vs. 13). When we consider all that God has done for us and who we are in Christ, we can indeed be joyful believers. Jesus prayed that God would keep us (vs. 11, 12, 15). When we contemplate God’s care in guarding and keeping us, we can have great assurance in our Christian lives.

Now we come to another request for which Jesus prayed for us in verses 15-19 – that we would be sanctified.

¹⁵ I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. ¹⁸ As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

What it is exactly Jesus is praying for when He asks the Father to “Sanctify them”?

Are You a Saint?

The term “sanctify” and the truths regarding “sanctification” are extremely important for us to understand in our Christian lives. Would you consider yourself a saint? The Bible tells us that all who have trusted Christ for salvation are “saints” (Eph. 1:1, 15, 19, 3:8, 18). Are you a holy person? All believers are called holy (Col. 3:12), and are exhorted to pursue holiness (2 Cor. 7:1). All believers are called “sanctified” (1 Cor. 1:2, 30) and to pursue sanctification (Heb. 12:4). All these terms: saints, holy, and sanctification, come from the same Greek word, which means “to set apart”. We don’t immediately see this in our English Bibles, but all these important descriptions of believer point to the fact that we are set apart, or devoted to God. As we read the New Testament, even here in John 17, we see that the term “sanctification” is used in two different ways. We must carefully read and study to let the context determine which way the word is used.

Two Aspects of Sanctification

We find there are two aspects of sanctification. We see this in Jesus’ own prayer. He prays in verse 17 for the Father to “**sanctify them in the truth**”. Then He prays in verse 19, “**I sanctify Myself, that they may be sanctified**”. It helps us

to understand that the word “sanctify” is used in two different ways.

Set Apart for God

The word for “holy”, “sanctify”, and “saint” simply means “set apart”. The first way “sanctify” is used means **to be set apart for God and for His service**. It speaks of anyone or anything that is devoted to God. It means first a separation from that is earthly, worldly, or profane. This is what Jesus means in John 17 when He prays about us being “out of world” (vs. 6) and “not of the world” (vs. 14). It means secondly to be completely and wholly devoted to God. This is speaking of every believer’s position. It is past tense and takes place when we repent and trust Christ. In 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30 and 6:1 Paul speaks of all believers as sanctified at the time of their salvation. In this sense it is closely related to our justification – the judicial act of God by which we are declared righteous and holy before Him. This comes through faith in what Christ did for us on the cross.

This is the aspect Jesus is using in verse 19 when He prays **“I sanctify Myself...”** Jesus set Himself apart to fulfill God’s plan of salvation. He wholly devoted Himself to following God’s will as the Father sent Him to this earth. That is why He could pray **“I have accomplished the work You have given me to do”** (John 17:4). Once again, Jesus is our example. Once again we see the glorious truth of the gospel. Jesus suffered and died on the cross so that our sin of lack of devotion and rebellion against Him could be forgiven. Jesus completely fulfilled the requirement of complete devotion to God so that could be credited to us – even when we are not completely devoted to God.

Living Up to Our Position

Our position as Christians is that of complete devotion to God. We are set aside to obey God and to do His will. We quickly realize in our daily lives, we are often NOT wholly devoted to God. We do not completely obey His word and His will. The second aspect of sanctification is our growing daily and consistently in our devotion and obedience to God.

This is a process which takes place over time and will only come to completion when we are in heaven. Peter exhorts believers to grow in this way:

...But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 3:18

The fact that Jesus prays for the Father to sanctify us shows that it primarily God’s work in our lives. While we certainly have a part, we work at growing relying upon God to provide the power to grow and change.

12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Philippians 2:12-13

How Do We Grow?

As Jesus prays, He clearly lets us know the means by which sanctification takes place. **“Sanctify them in the truth, Thy Word is truth.”** (17:17). It is through God’s Word that we are saved and set apart for Him. It is through God’s Word that we grow more each day to live up that lofty position.

As we read, study, and hear God’s word proclaimed we learn and understand more about God and His glory, holiness, and majesty.

We recognize more clearly how awful and heinous our sin is, that it took Jesus dying on the cross for it to be forgiven. We come to realize how sinful we still are and how much we need to grow in our devotion and obedience.

We come to greater understanding of what it meant for God the Son to take on human nature so that He could live a perfect life to fulfill all righteousness and to suffer and die for our sin.

The Holy Spirit uses God’s word to convict us and show us where we need to change and grow.

This is why it so important to spend time reading, studying, and hearing God’s Word. As we spend time in God’s Word, we cannot help but grow to love Christ more. And when we do we will indeed be more and more dedicated to the One we love!

BIBLE STUDIES

Thursdays, 12:00 Noon

TREASURER 'S CONFERENCE ROOM

(EB 54 – Basement East Wing)