

The High Priestly Prayer of Christ

John 17:13-16

Part Five

Our church teaches that once a person makes a genuine profession of Christ in Christ and does in fact become a true disciple, they will persevere in their faith and will ultimately be ushered into the presence of Christ in glory. We believe this because the Scriptures in many different ways teach this. This morning we will continue to consider one of those ways as we once again return to our study of the Gospel of John.

We are presently examining what is commonly known as the high priestly prayer of Christ, a prayer that was prayed on the last night of Christ's earthly life and is recorded for us in **John 17:1-26**.

Though this prayer is difficult to subdivide, because it is essentially a unity, I am attempting to provide for you a way to track its movement by asking the following question: Who did Christ pray for in His high priestly prayer? And that is the question that we have already begun to answer. And what have we learned so far?

First of all, Christ in John 17:1-5 prayed for Himself. So what was His specific request? He asked His Father to glorify Him in the hour that had now come upon Him; or in other words, He asked His Father to glorify Him in all the events that were about to take place that involved Him; such as His arrest, trial, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and coronation. This was His specific request. And what was the reason for this specific request? He asked His Father to glorify Him in the hour that had now come upon Him in order that He in turn might glorify His Father. And how would His glorification glorify His Father according to **John 17:2**? Christ's glorification would glorify His Father because Christ's glorification would allow His Father's eternal redemptive plan to move forward making it possible for Christ to give the gift of eternal life to those His Father had chosen for salvation.

But even though Christ's prayer for His own personal glorification was primarily driven by His desire to see His Father glorified, He still very much longed for His own glorification, which was made very clear to us in **John**

17:4-5. So whom did Christ pray for first? He prayed for Himself and for His glorification.

So after praying for Himself and His glorification, whom did He pray for next? Christ in John 17:6-19 prayed for His eleven disciples. This is the section of Christ's high priestly prayer that we began studying several weeks ago.

And how did Christ begin this rather lengthy section of verses? He began by highlighting the reason why He was personally moved to pray for them. And what was that motivation?

Christ's prayer on behalf of His eleven disciples was motivated by an unconditional love rooted in the eternal decrees of His Father (John 17:6-11). We saw this in **John 17:11-16.** And what was His specific request?

Christ's request on behalf of His eleven disciples in John 17:11-16 was that His Father would keep them in His name. Let me read for you the first part of **John 17:11.** **“And I am no more in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name.”** What does that mean?

When Christ asked His Father to keep His disciples “in His name” or according to His person, He was asking His Father to keep His disciples loyal to Him as He Himself had revealed Him. So why was this necessary?

Christ had, up to that point in time, protected His eleven disciples as a mother hen would protect her chicks, but He was about to leave them. And because He was about to leave them He was now asking His Father to protect them even as He had protected them while He was with them. In other words, what we are witnessing here in respect to Christ's prayer on behalf of His disciples is a chick transfer. Christ in this prayer is transferring His chicks or His eleven disciples from the protective care of His wings to the protective care of His Father's wings.

Therefore in light of Christ's prayer on behalf of His eleven disciples, what would have been the odds that Christ's eleven disciples would, after Christ's departure, remain loyal to the name of Christ's Father and ultimately be

ushered into the glory of heaven? The odds would of course be one hundred percent!

But someone might ask but what about Judas? And what would be the answer to that question? The answer is that Judas was not under the protective care of Christ, nor had ever been under the protective care of Christ. We know this because Christ identified Judas as the “son of perdition” or “the son of damnation” in **John 17:12**.

Judas to many appeared to have been a true disciple of Christ, but the truth was that He was only a pseudo-disciple, and was included among the company of the twelve, not because He was a genuine disciple but rather because He was necessary in terms of what had been prophesied; or in other words, Judas was necessary in order to fulfill what had been prophesied in **Psalms 41:9** concerning a betrayer.

This is where we left off last week. Unfortunately we just did not have enough time last week to consider all that Christ said in regard to His request. But this morning we will complete our examination of what He said. And hopefully the completion of this examination will once again reassure us that when an individual makes a genuine profession of faith in Christ they, without exception, will persevere and will ultimately be ushered into the glory of heaven.

We are now ready to move on in our text and our continuing examination Christ’s request on behalf of His eleven disciples.

So after the request on behalf of His eleven disciples in **John 17:11** that they be kept in His Father’s name, which of course excluded Judas based on **John 17:12**, He now moves on to **John 17:13**. And how does He begin this verse? He begins it this way, **“But now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world.”** So what is this all about?

When Jesus begins this verse with the words, **“But now I come to Thee,”** we might think He is moving on to a different request other than the request that He had just made on behalf of His disciples. But this is not what He meant at all. When Jesus used the word “but” in John 17:13, He did not change the request, He simply changed His focus in respect to the request. Or in other words, when Jesus said, **“but now I come to Thee; and these**

things I speak in the world,” Jesus changed the focus from the perseverance of His disciples in respect to keeping His Father’s name to what they themselves would personally enjoy as a consequence of that perseverance.

So what was the positive consequence that would be derived by His eleven disciples as they continued to persevere in keeping His Father’s name after Christ’s departure? Let us continue to read the verse but this time we will read the entire verse. So what does it say? This is what it says. **“But now I come to Thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy made full in themselves.”** So what would be the positive consequence of Christ’s disciples persevering and remaining loyal to His Father’s name?

The positive consequence of Christ’s disciples remaining loyal to His Father’s name, in answer to Christ’s prayer on their behalf, was that Christ’s joy would be made full in them (John 17:13).

So let me ask you a question. When Christ refers to His joy being made full in His disciples in response to His prayer on their behalf, what was He talking about?

When Christ referred to His joy being made full in His disciples, He was referring to the joy of obedience being made full in them (John 15:10-11). How do we know this? We know this because of what Jesus already shared with us in **John 15:10-11.**

Let me read these verses for you. **“If you keep my commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandment, and abide in His love. (11) These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made [what?] full.”**

So let me ask you a question. What did Christ want to do more than anything else? He wanted, for the sake of love, to be obedient to His Father! Isn’t this exactly what Christ said in **John 15:10?** For Christ, being obedient to His Father is what really lit His rockets.

So now let me ask you another question. Did He envision that His disciple’s rockets would be lit in the very same way? And what is the answer.

Absolutely! He envisioned that His disciple's rockets would share this very same kind of joy, which is clear in **John 15:11**.

And this certainly should not be a surprise to us. When the disciples of Christ are joined to the life of Christ and choose to live their lives in the power of Christ, they will be characterized by His joy. A little bit of joy, or a moderate amount of joy? No! Not a little bit of joy, or a moderate amount of joy, but a whole lot of joy. In fact, so much joy that Christ describes His joy as filling them.

There are a lot of things in this world that light our rockets but when push comes to shove there should be nothing in our lives that light our rockets more than obedience, if we are truly disciples of Christ and have been joined to the life of Christ.

Unfortunately this is not the experience of many professing believers. In other words, when they discover that being obedient to Christ might actually cost them something in terms of some earthly pleasure or comfort they suddenly find no joy in terms of their so-called Christian faith and will quickly seek to justify their disobedience in some clever but fleshly way.

Hopefully this does not describe us. Hopefully we actually do in fact find obedience the greatest joy of our lives no matter what that obedience might cost us in terms of the things of this world. And if this is in fact true of our lives it certainly is a truly amazing thing.

But what makes it even more amazing is that Christ expects His disciples would experience this joyful obedience even in spite of the fact that because of their obedience would in fact be hated by the world. Christ makes this very clear in the very next few verses.

So let us begin with the very first words of Christ to His Father in **verse 14**. And what did He say?

This is what He said. **“I have given them Thy Word.”** He had not simply spoken His words to His disciples; He had given His words or His Father's words to them.

Now you might think because Christ had given this wonderful treasure to His disciples that the disciples would find a warm welcome in respect to this world. Why wouldn't the world give them a warm welcome? Christ's eleven disciples now had been given the very word of God. And certainly you would think that they would want to know what He had said. But this of course was not the case at all. Let us continue to read **verse 14**. **"I have given them Thy word; and the world has hated them."** So what did this mean for Christ's eleven disciples and for every other true disciple of Christ as well?

This is what it means: Though Christ's disciples will, while in this world, be characterized by Christ's joy, they will also experience the world's hatred (John 17:14). So why is this?

The world started hating Christ's eleven disciples after they had received God's truth provided to them in and through Christ. And why was this? Why had the world started hating the eleven disciples after they had received God's truth provided for them in and through Christ? The world started hating Christ's disciples after they had received God's truth because God's truth so radically changed them that Christ described them as no longer "of the world".

Isn't this exactly what He said at the end of **John 17:14**? Let us continue to read the verse but this time we will read the entire verse. **"I have given them Thy word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."** Wow! They had been so radically changed by having received God's truth in and through Christ that they were no longer of the world.

In effect, they could never go back to what they once were. They had been forever changed, and so much so that they would be forever hated by the world.

So if this were the truth, then wouldn't it seem reasonable that Christ would then ask His Father, that His disciples, who were no longer a part of this world, would be taken from the world even as He Himself would be shortly taken from this world?

But that was not going to happen? Let me read for you **John 17:15**. **“I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world.”**

Though Christ knew that those who had been radically transformed by God’s truth and who were no longer of the world would be hated, He did not ask His Father to take them from this world (John 17:15). Why?

Christ did not ask His Father to take them out of this world because they, as His disciples, had work to do (Matthew 28:19-20). Let me read for you **Matthew 28:19-20**. **“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”**

So let us put this all together. We, in receiving God’s truth revealed in and through Christ, will be hated by the world. We will be hated by the world because we have been so dramatically transformed by the word that we have received in and through Christ that Christ describes us as no longer being of the world. But even though this is true, Christ, rather than asking the Father to remove us, is giving us a mission that ultimately sends us into world to the very people that hates us.

But it is even worse than that. When Christ sent His disciples into the world on this mission, He in fact was sending us into Satan’s kingdom, where we would not simply be confronting flesh and blood but principles and powers.

Now you might think but isn’t this asking an awful lot of us? Of course it is! But even in spite of the fact that Christ did not ask His Father to take His disciples out of this world, He did ask His Father to keep them from the evil one, or in other words Satan (John 17:15). Let me read for you **John 17:15** but this time I will read the entire verse. **“I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one.”** And why is He so concerned for them?

Though Satan may be a defeated foe, He still can wreak havoc in our lives if we fail to exercise faith in Christ’s victory and draw upon the resources available to us in Him. Is this hard to do? Absolutely! Satan is the father of lies and if we are not careful he will cause us to doubt God and His truth as revealed to us in Christ and through Christ.

This is why the prayer of Christ on behalf of His disciples is so very critical, but we can be confident of this: That even though we may be hated by the world and attacked by Satan, our faith will not fail. And why is that? Our faith will not fail because Christ is our high priest and forever lives to make intercession for us.

Our church teaches that once a person makes a genuine profession of Christ in Christ, and does in fact become a true disciple, they will persevere in their faith and will ultimately be ushered into the presence of Christ in glory.

Why do we believe this? We believe this for many different reasons. But one of the reasons why we believe this is because Christ is not indifferent toward His disciples, or in other words toward those who have received His word and been dramatically transformed by His word. He will intercede for them just as He interceded for His eleven disciples here in John 17:11-16, praying to His Father that He would keep His disciples in His name in spite of all that they were going to suffer after His departure.

May God give us the grace, in spite of the hatred of the world and the attacks of Satan, to know that through the prayers of Christ we will persevere and will one day be with Him in glory.