

CHRIST, OUR INTERCESSOR  
John 17

Intro: There is nothing that is more encouraging than to have some fellow-believer tell you that they are praying for you. But it is even more encouraging if you know that person to be one who really walks with the Lord!

If that is the case, what should it mean to us when we learn that the Lord Jesus Christ prays for us -- prays for us constantly, and prays for us personally. We know that He also prays for us effectually. See John 11:41, 42 when the Lord prayed at Lazarus' tomb:

Father, I thank thee that thou has heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou has sent me.

Link this with John's words in 1 John 5:14, 15, "And this is the confidence that we have in him . . ."

We have a number of instances in which our Lord is spoken of as praying while He was here on earth, but John 17 is the only prayer of any length which He prayed that is recorded in the Gospels.

It has to contain all that is necessary for the perfection of His people since that is the reason for His intercession. Cf. Heb. 7:25.

We see that this is His concern in prayer from such passages as:

- 1) His prayer for Peter -- Luke 22:31-34.
- 2) Romans 8:34.
- 3) 1 John 2:1.
- 4) All of the passages in Hebrews which speak of His present ministry in heaven. E.g., Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; and 9:24 + many others.

John Owen has stated this in the following words:

. . . throughout the whole chapter is the demand of Christ for the accomplishment of the whole compact and all the promises that were made to him when he undertook to be a Saviour which concerned both himself and his church (Vol. 12, p. 506).

We learn from our Lord's prayer that intercessory prayer is actually prayer in which we lay the promises of God before Him, and claim them!

This prayer is peculiarly the Lord's prayer because no one else could possibly pray it. We may take some of the requests, but the prayer, as a whole, is His!

I would like to do three things in this introductory message if

the Lord will enable me to do so:

- 1) To point out the divisions in the prayer.
- 2) To mention the requests that the Lord presented to the Father.
- 3) To indicate from the prayer the main burden that was on the heart of the Lord.

## I. THE DIVISIONS.

- A. The Lord's prayer for Himself (John 17:1-5).
- B. The Lord's prayer for those who were His people then (John 17:6-19).
- C. The Lord's prayer for those <sup>who had believed and for those</sup> who would believe in the future (John 17:20-26).

~~BY THE LORD'S PRAYER FOR THOSE WHO HAD BELIEVED AND FOR THOSE WHO WOULD BELIEVE (JOHN 17:20-26)~~

## II. THE REQUESTS.

There are six of them. One is in the first part, three in the second, one in the third, and one in the fourth.

- A. Our Lord's request for Himself -- that He might be glorified (John 17:1, 5).

The repetition shows its importance.

- B. The requests for those who were His people then:

1. "Keep . . . that they may be one" (John 17:11).
2. Not to be taken out of the world, but to be kept from the Evil One (John 17:15).
3. "Sanctify them through thy truth . . . (John 17:17) -- a prayer for holiness.

- C. The requests for those who would believe in the future:  
~~THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE (JOHN 17:21)~~

1. " . . . that they all may be one . . ." (John 17:21).
2. " . . . that they also . . . be with me where I am . . ." (John 17:24).

## III. THE MAIN BURDEN.

Here we need to notice who He was concerned about, and what His concern was for them.

A. Who was He concerned about?

Two verses give us our answer: John 17:9, 20.

Repeatedly He refers to them as those who were given to Him by the Father. Cf. vv. 2, 6 (2x), 9, 11, 12, 24.

B. What was His burden for them?

One thing: "that they may be one" (v. 11).

All of the other requests were related to this.

Notice the number of times that it is mentioned: vv. 11, 21, 22, 23.

Individually they needed to be kept, individually they needed to be protected from the Evil One, individually they needed to be sanctified -- and all to the end that they might be ONE! And all of this was in anticipation of the oneness that would be theirs in heaven.

Cf. Eph. 1:9-12.

Concl: Now it should be impressed upon our minds that these ought to be the main concerns in our lives, and for our church -- oneness, true spiritual oneness.

To attain this end we must be kept by the Father,  
kept from the Evil One,  
sanctified by the Word of truth.

Cf. Eph. 4:1-16 with its emphasis on unity. Our unity is not a faithless ecumenicism where the truth is set aside, but it is in the truth, in Christ, and by the Holy Spirit. This is to be the chief object in the ministry of the local church.

This is what the Lord prayed for, and we can be assured that this is what He still prays for.

It is no wonder that the Lord hates those who sow discord. Cf. Prov. 6:14, 19.

Let us pray that the Lord will bring to us those whom He wants to be with us, and to keep all others away. And let us pray about these very things for each other, that we may experience the oneness for which our Lord prayed, and still prays.

Cf. Psalm 133.

WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT THE SCRIPTURES  
John 17:12-14

Intro: Have you noticed in our Lord's prayer how He seemed to be occupied first with one thing and then another. At this point in His prayer it was the Word of God that concerned Him.

There are really four things that He had to say about the Word in these three verses:

- 1) That the Scriptures will be fulfilled. See v. 12.
- 2) That the Word represented the sum-total of His spoken ministry while He was on the earth. See v. 13a.
- 3) That it was through the Word that His people would experience the fulness of joy. See v. 13b.
- 4) That it was because of the Word that the world would hate His followers. See v. 14.

Let us consider each one of these.

I. THE SCRIPTURES WILL BE FULFILLED (John 17:12).

This is given in connection with what the Lord had been saying to the Father about keeping His own people. This, remember, seems to have been the main petition.

He had asked His Father to keep them ( $\tau\eta\rho\acute{\epsilon}\omega$ ); now He was saying that He had kept them in a twofold sense ( $\tau\eta\rho\acute{\epsilon}\omega$  and  $\phi\upsilon\lambda\acute{\alpha}\sigma\sigma\omega$ ).

The first meant that He had always been concerned about them, that He had kept His eye upon them. The second meant that there were times when He had had to protect them from assaults that had come from the outside.

Cf. our Lord's protection of Peter. See Luke 22:31, 32. He never did any such thing for Judas--the one our Lord was speaking about here. Cf. what Satan did to Judas in John 13:2, 27.

And so there was one who was "lost," but, although he was an apostle, there is nothing to indicate that Judas was one who had been given by the Father to the Son. Our Lord called him "the son of perdition," and Judas was one who had been spoken of in the OT. Cf. John 13:18 (Psa. 41:9). Also Psa. 109:8 (see vv. 6-19).

There a lot of things that we do not understand about Judas but he certainly represents that segment of humanity who are "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" (Rom. 9:22b). Judas had more opportunities than most to be saved, but he turned the other way.

The point that our Lord did make out of this was the fact that the Scriptures had been fulfilled! And this is what needs to concern us--especially as we think about being kept.

— On this, cf. John 10:35; 13:18; 19:24, 28, 36, 37.

The point that our Lord made should cause us to praise Him for His Word. Cf. Matt. 5:18; 24:35; Isa. 40:8.

Cf. also Psalms 119:89.

## II. THE WORD ALONE WAS OUR LORD'S MINISTRY ON EARTH (John 17:13a)

We see this in the words, "I have given them thy word," in v. 14. See also v. 8. Cf. John 14:10b; 3:34; 7:16, 17; 8:28, 38a; 12:49.

But note, "And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world . . ." What things--His prayer, or all of His other words? Probably both!

The Lord's ministry was a ministry of the Word of God.

— Is this really sufficient--without any additions? Do we believe that through the Word alone, blessed by the Holy Spirit, that the work of God can actually be accomplished? Many of the Lord's people do not feel that this is enough. Remember from our message this morning, and Rom. 10:15, that the Lord sent men to preach the Gospel of peace--period!

Note Paul's charge to Timothy: 2 Tim. 4:2.

May God give us grace to follow the Lord in this!

## III. THE WORD ALONE GIVES A JOY THAT IS FULL (John 17:13b).

This means that it does not need anything else to make our joy complete.

Joy comes through learning what is in the Word. Joy comes through believing the Word, its doctrines and its promises. Joy comes through obeying the Word. Joy comes from seeing the Lord in the Word.

Cf. Psalms 19:10; 119:111; Job 23:12; Jer. 15:16; Luke 24:32.

— What a treasure God has given us in His Word! And as good as it is to read books about the Word, let us never let that be a substitute for reading the Word itself!

Finally . . .

#### IV. IT IS BECAUSE OF THE WORD THAT THE WORLD HATES US (John 17:14).

— This introduces a section in the Lord's prayer where He has more to say about the world.

We see this even in the Garden of Eden--the Devil's hatred of the Word.

We see it in Pharaoh when Moses went to him with his, "Thus saith the Lord . . ." (Ex. 5:1).

Perhaps we do not see this like the people of God have seen it in the past because today we seem to have a different idea about the world--one of friendship and compromise, even making the church as much like the world as possible because we are told that that is the way to reach the world!

But when the Church is living by the Word, and preaching the Word, then the hatred of the world can be seen again.

Cf. the Lord's words in John 15:18-27.

— The world hates us because of what the Word does to it. It changes our lives--our way of life is different; our outlook is different; our objectives are different. It is through the Word that we have been taken out of the world, not in the sense that we have been removed from the world, but by the fact that we no longer belong to it. Cf. John 17:6.

Note how this was seen in the following:

- 1) Potiphar's wife and Joseph.
- 2) Daniel and the governors and satraps who plotted against him concerning his God.
- 3) Herodias and John the Baptist.
- 4) The Jews and Paul.
- 5) Our Lord, as mentioned in Acts 4:27, 28.

Cf. John 3:19, 20.

Concl: What should all of this mean to us?

We ought to be thankful for the way the Lord prayed for us, and is still praying--that we would be kept in terms of both words used in verse 12. We need to keep our confidence in the Word.

— We need to be kept faithful to the ministry of the Word. We need to be kept joyful in the Word. And we need to stand firm regardless of the opposition and hatred we may have to face from the world, inside and outside of the Church.

A HOLY PEOPLE IN AN UNHOLY WORLD  
John 17:15-17

Intro: There seems to be general agreement among those who have written on this passage that "the evil" at the end of verse 15 should be, the Evil One. We had a similar passage in Ephesians 6:16,

Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked," or, of the Wicked One--the same word that is used in John 17:15.

The Devil is called the Evil One because the effect of his work is always bad. He is not only satisfied to be as corrupt as he is, but the word suggests that he "is not content unless he is corrupting others as well, and drawing them into the same destruction with himself" (Trench, p. 316).

The Devil is also called the Evil One because he was the one who introduced sin, with all of its tragic effects, into the world.

Understanding who the Lord was referring to, we can see the tremendous scope of this verse, the 15th:

- 1) "I" is the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2) "Thou" is God, the Father.
- 3) "Them" refers to believers. (The prayer is expanded in verse 20.)
- 4) "The world" has to do not only with the earth, but the world system over which the Devil rules. All people who are without Christ are a part of this system--are hopelessly held in bondage to it.
- 5) "The evil" is the Evil One, the Devil and Satan--call him what you will. He rules over the world. Cf. 2 Cor. 4:3, 4.

When you expand this to the One Who made it possible for us to have these words, we need to recognize the work of the Holy Spirit also.

Therefore, this 15th verse is a very amazing verse when you consider all of the persons who are mentioned and the great issues involved.

We could also say that there are three requests in these three verses--one negative; the other two, positive:

- 1) He did not ask the Father to take His people out of the world.
- 2) He did ask Him to "keep them from the evil" One.
- 3) He also asked the Father to sanctify them, and to do it through the truth, through the Word.

In between these requests we have a statement repeated which was made at the end of verse 14. See verse 16 to compare. All who were then included in the word, "them," were once a part of the world. We see this in verse 6, and we also see how they got out!

To say that "they are not of the world" means that they did not belong to the world. They were not a part of that system, although once they were. But their new origin and character have nothing to do with the world. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 John 3:1; John 15:19.

Cf. also 1 John 4:4, 6 which teaches that believers "are of God."

Thus, one reason for the Devil's hatred of us is that we formerly were under his domain and control, but now we are not!

In view, therefore, of the danger facing the child of God, it is something for us to understand that the Lord did not then pray that His people would not be taken "out of the world." Eventually we will be removed. See verse 24. But why not now?

I. THE NEGATIVE REQUEST: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world."

Why?

- A. Because the Lord had work for them to do--as the following verses show. See vv. 21, 23.
- B. That we might see the emptiness of the world out of which we have been delivered.

Cf. 1 John 2:15-17.

- C. That we might glorify the Lord with greater feeling when we realize what He has done to bring us out.

Cf. Col. 1:12, 13.

- D. That we might realize our own great weakness and depravity.

Remember how this was illustrated in the life of Job.

- E. That we might glorify the Lord properly for the way He takes care of us in enemy territory.

Cf. John 10:27-30; 1 Pet. 1:5.

II. THE REQUEST THAT THEY BE KEPT: "But that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" One.

The request means

- A. That the Lord knew that they could not keep themselves. The Enemy was far too great for them.
- B. The Lord also knew that only the Father could keep them.



He alone has the power.

- C. The Lord also knew that the Father had plans as to how He would keep them.

We see His greatest provision in Eph. 6:10-20--the Word of God, the work of salvation, and prayer.

See also verses like 2 Cor. 2:11; 1 Cor. 7:5; Eph. 4:27; 1 Thess. 3:5; 1 Pet. 5:6-9.

Having seen all of these, we must also see that there is a relationship between the first two and the third request:

### III. THE REQUEST THAT THEY BE SANCTIFIED: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

#### A. The meaning of sanctification.

It means to be made holy. If you could see the text in the original language you would see that there is a vital relationship between the title, "Holy Father," and the verb, "sanctify." To be sanctified means that we become like our heavenly, "holy Father." It is to like our Lord Jesus Christ, since He and the Father are one in nature!

This is undoubtedly the most amazing part about our salvation--that this is what our Lord prays for, and that such a thing is even possible!

But we get a clearer idea of the word when we also realize that it means to be set apart. This suggests that the child of God is going to go through an experience of separation. Just what kind of a separation will it be?

It is a twofold separation--from and unto. Failure to recognize both will give us an incomplete idea of what sanctification is.

- 1) We are to be separated from:
  - a) Our sins.
  - b) Worldly people--those who do not know the Lord.
  - c) The world's way of life. Cf. 1 John 2:15-17.

There is much more to this than we might at first realize.
- 2) But we are also to be separated unto God--to live for His glory, to do His will, to be concerned about serving Him. And this is a change which is not only outward, but it is inward. The child of God is changed in heart when he is saved, but then everything else about him has to be changed.

## B. The Sanctifier.

We obviously have a responsibility toward our own sanctification, but that does not mean that we do the sanctifying. This prayer was directed to the Father because all of the work of sanctifying us is God's work, and the sooner we learn this, the better off we will be.

This is the meaning of Phil. 2:12, 13.

Note Paul's prayer in 1 Thess. 5:23:

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly;  
and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and  
body be preserved blameless unto the coming  
of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And then in verse 24 Paul added,  
Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will  
do it.

The Lord Jesus will be involved, and so will the Holy Spirit, but the thing that we need to realize is that sanctification is a work of God--not our work, dependent upon us.

Finally,

## C. The means of sanctification.

Our Lord made this very clear in His prayer: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

When we say this, we have said more than any of us can possibly realize.

To be sure we are sanctified through obedience to the Word--as Psa. 119:9 would indicate. Through obedience to the Word, our lives take on an entirely different character, and get us headed in an entirely different direction.

But let me ask you this: Do you think it is just a coincidence that our Lord Jesus Christ is called in the Gospel of John both "the truth" and "the Word"? Cf. John 14:6 and John 1:1, 14.

There is the most intimate relationship between Christ and the written Word of God, closer than most of us have ever realized. Therefore, we must surely see that sanctification is not just a matter of doing, of obedience, but of learning and knowing and understanding the truth as it is in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Cf. Psa. 119:11. This more than memorizing Scripture.

This speaks of getting all of the truth into our hearts so that we experience its sanctifying power. And God is the only One Who can make that possible.

Concl: May I close by reminding you of the One Who prayed this prayer? It was none other than our Lord Jesus Christ!

- 1) He wants you and me here in this world. He has placed us right where we are, and that is where He wants to use us.
- 2) He is still praying for us to be kept, watched over by the Father, so that we will not be harmed.
- 3) He wants us to be sanctified. And He knows Who can sanctify us, and how we can be sanctified.

He is the One Who said, "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet. 16).

What should we do?

- 1) Recognize the need.
- 2) Pray about it daily for ourselves and for our fellow-believers.
- 3) Give ourselves to the God-appointed means: THE WORD OF GOD.

## SENT AND SANCTIFIED

John 17:18, 19

Intro: These two verses are obviously related to the verses which have just preceded them: vv. 14-17. The relationship is established by two words: "the world" and "sanctified."

The Lord's own people had been given to Him "out of the world" (v. 6), and so they were no longer "of the world" (vv. 14, 16), but they were still in the world and the Lord was not praying that they should be taken out. See v. 15. Now we learn from v. 18 that they are to be "sent . . . into the world." Therefore they needed to be "sanctified through the truth," or as Westcott translates "truth" which in the Greek has not article, truly, or really, sanctified.

Sanctification means to be holy. Obviously the Lord did not need to be holy, and so we must revert in His case back to the original meaning of the word: to be set apart. But we will consider that after we see what was going to happen to the disciples, and to all future believers. They were to be

## I. SENT (John 17:18).

And the interesting thing about this verse is that the sending of His disciples was connected with His mission into the world. (Read the verse.) Note: "As thou . . . even so have I . . ."

In other words, our mission is related to His mission, and ours follows the pattern of His.

All through the Gospel of John our Lord referred to the fact that He had been sent by the Father. In order to understand our mission, we need to know what He had to say on various occasions about His mission. If ours is like His, then His will describe ours.

- A. We are sent to the same place. Cf. John 17:18.
- B. With the same divine commission. Cf. John 17:18; 20:21; 7:28, 29; 8:42.
- C. For the same purpose. Cf. John 3:17.
- D. With the same message. Cf. John 7:16, 17; 8:26; 12:49; 14:24.
- E. To do God's will and work. Cf. John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38-40; 8:29; 9:4.
- F. To take the lower place. Cf. John 13:16.

G. But not alone. Cf. John 5:36, 37; 6:57; 8:16, 29.  
See also Matt. 28:18-20, esp. v. 20.

H. By the same Spirit. Cf. John 20:22, 23. See Luke 4:  
16-21.

I. To seek God's glory. Cf. John 7:18.

J. But not to stay. Cf. John 7:33; 16:5; 17:24.

But all of this required a special provision by the Lord--His being set apart for the work that He had come to do. It was only through His work that His disciples could be "sanctified," set apart, for the work that the Lord had for them to do.

Our Lord's work would continue through them, as we see in the Book of Acts.

## II. SANCTIFIED (John 17:19).

Cf. John 10:36.

Sanctification for the disciples would indicate the work necessary for their salvation--justification and glorification as well--but the emphasis is on that work necessary for their ministry on earth.

See Tit. 2:11-14; Eph. 5:26; 1 Pet. 2:24.

Concl: More is said about the nature of their work in verses 20-23, but this is the preparation for the work: holiness of life. This means being set apart from sin, from their own purposes and objectives, to give themselves to God, His will, and His work. It required the work of Christ on the Cross, and still requires His present intercession for us, and the impact of the Word of God upon our lives. In all of these things the Lord is not only the Source of our holiness, but also the pattern.

Cf. 1 Peter 2:21-24.

This is why we are exhorted in Heb. 12:2 to be "looking unto Jesus"--"that we might be partakers of his holiness" (Heb. 12:10b).

## MISSIONARIES AND THEIR MISSION

John 17:19-23

Intro: Last Sunday night we spent all of our time in the evening service on one verse: John 17:18. I had intended to deal with verse 19 also, but did not get to it.

Verse 18 speaks of the similarity of the Lord's mission in the world with the mission that we have. His mission had to do with salvation, and so does our mission.

Some would like to limit the words which were spoken to the Apostles and make them apply only to that small group of men. Obviously they had gifts and responsibilities which were confined to their day, but that was not true of their mission. The proof is in verse 20.

In our day the term missionary has almost been restricted to those who go to some foreign country, or to neglected areas in this country. And there is no doubt but that God calls some to such ministries. But, when we go back to the Scriptures we soon realize that we are all missionaries. We are all "sent . . . into the world" (v. 18). We are all to be "witnesses" of Christ wherever the Lord has placed us. There were no Apostles after the twelve, and so verse 20, which mentions no restrictions at all (except for the fact our Lord was praying for those who would believe on Him).

So, when the Lord said that He had "sent them into the world," we must recognize from verse 20 that He was talking about all believers. He was praying for all of us. We are all missionaries. That is what we are in our relationship to the world.

I hope this is clear to everyone.

Let us think tonight about OUR MISSION. We cannot really do that without dealing also with ourselves as MISSIONARIES, but let us approach both the work and ourselves as involved in the work.

## I. A DIFFICULT WORK.

It would better to be say that it is AN IMPOSSIBLE WORK. That is clear from the fact that our Lord prayed for us, and undoubtedly continues to pray for us.

And His praying teaches us that we ought to pray for each other. The only way that this work can succeed is by prayer. There certainly are other factors, but none is more important than this!

## II. A RISKY WORK.

We are being "sent . . . into the world"--the Devil's territory. And it is our objective to bring people out of the world.

The dangers involved in this ministry, or mission, were clearly indicated by the Lord's petition in verse 15--"that thou shouldest keep them from the evil," i.e., the Evil One. It has infuriated the Devil to lose us, but to have us come back for others only intensifies his hatred of us.

Remember what we learned in Ephesians 6:10-12!

The Devil will shoot many darts at us: temptations to sin, discouragement, unbelief, self-confidence, impatience, a tendency to be occupied with methods, and a host of other things. One of his greatest weapons is fear, and along with that often goes compromise.

So the Lord Jesus prayed for us, and He continues to pray for us, that we will be kept from the Evil One.

But notice also that this mission has some specific objectives--two are mentioned here.

### III. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES.

We need to be clear on this because one of the things that the Evil One does is to make our objectives different from what the Lord said they were.

E.g., the Devil will make us concentrate on making people happy, or prosperous, or he will have us get side-tracked on solving problems, or popularity, or other things that we see going on today in the name of missions.

But we have two:

Verses 21 and 23 give the same one twice, plus there is a second one in verse 23.

- A. The first one: "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (v. 21b); "and that the world may know that thou hast sent me" (v. 23m).

Just to show you how difficult our task is, we are to go to the world to get people in the world to know about God, Who it was that He sent into the world, and why our Lord came.

This does not call for some kind of a blitz upon people to extract a confession out of them when they may know very little, or nothing, about what we have to say to

them. But our mission calls for teaching.

Cf. Matt. 28:18-20.

Notice what the Apostle John said about his testimony.

Cf. 1 John 4:14,

And we have seen and do testify that the Father  
sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

It could not be clearer.

Paul stated the same truth in different words when he  
said,

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all  
acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world  
to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

That is in 1 Timothy 1:15.

But here is a second objective--and this is one that is all  
but totally neglected.

- B. The second one: "that the world may know that thou . . .  
hast loved them, as thou hast loved me" (v. 23b).

There are specific people on the earth, those who have  
believed on Christ, who are uniquely the objects of the  
Father's love--whom God loves just like He loves His  
only begotten Son.

There are a lot of people who claim to be Christians, or  
who claim to be the true children of God, but it is a  
part of our witness that we should convince people in  
the world, whom God wants out of the world, that WE are  
the true people of God!

This is one reason they will accept our testimony. Cf.  
v. 20: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them  
also which shall believe on me through their word.  
Note that last phrase, "through their word."

Cf. Acts 4:13,

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and  
John, and perceived that they were unlearned  
and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took  
knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.

Cf. also Acts 6:10, regarding Stephen,

And they were not able to resist the wisdom and  
the spirit by which he spake.

What happened in the early Church as people were saved?  
They not only believed in Christ and were joined to Him,  
but they were joined with the people of God; they were  
joined to the Church. Cf. Acts 2:47b.



This leads me to one other thing that our Lord mentioned in His prayer to the Father--one thing, but that one thing is made up of three essential parts.

Let us call the three . . .

#### IV. SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS.

These are SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR MISSIONARIES!

Our Lord did not mention degrees from a Bible school or Seminary--although in some way we need to be grounded in the Word. The Lord seems to have placed that responsibility upon the leaders in the local churches, and upon fathers in their homes.

Nor did He mention health. Paul probably could not have passed the physical examination that missionaries are called upon to pass. Health is a wonderful gift, but poor health excuses no child of God from being a missionary.

What did He mention?

##### A. Sanctification by the Word of God.

Cf. vv. 18, 19! No child of God can really expect to see fullest blessing of God upon his mission who is not daily being sanctified more and more by the Word.

What does this mean?

It means that he is learning what is in the Word. It means that the Word is changing his life, making him more holy. It means that he is obeying the Word, that the Word is the pattern of his life. It means that he is a person who loves the Lord and lives to please HIM!

Following the Lord's order in His prayer, let me ask two questions:

- 1) How can a child of God know when this is taking place?
- 2) What will follow his being sanctified?

I do not say that what I am about to mention is the only thing, but this is one of the most important--and it will evidently, from our Lord's prayer, always follow.

##### B. Oneness with the people of God (John 17:21, 23).

We had it also in v. 11b.

Oneness in the Word of God is not the unification of all religious people regardless of what they believe about the Gospel and about Jesus Christ. Oneness in Scripture

has to do with the Church, with the people of God. It is a spiritual oneness--a oneness based upon the truth of Scripture, based upon Christ, based upon our union with God and with Christ and with each other. It is a oneness which calls for humility, but also for faithfulness. To understand Biblical unity, read such passages as Ephesians 4:1-16 and Philippians 2:1-16. Read the Book of Acts and see the unity that they had in the early days of the Church.

From the order in our Lord's prayer we can say that the reason there is so little unity in the Church is because there is so little sanctification. Holiness produces unity, and the combination is what God uses in our lives to convince the world, people in the world, that God did send His Son to be a Saviour of all who believe in Him. This is the way the Lord has chosen to draw men to Christ. There is a true witness of sanctified believers who are walking in fellowship with God and with each other.

But there is one more qualification. Have you noticed v. 22?

This is one more factor that contributes to our oneness and to the blessing of God upon our witness. Let us call it by the name that the Lord used:

C. The glory. (Read v. 22.)

"Glory" is likeness to God and to Christ. This is the result of sanctification. This, too, comes through the Word. This is the final purpose of our salvation--that we become like the Lord.

But we do not wait until we get to heaven for this to begin. It will be finished there, but it begins here!

Cf. 2 Cor. 3:18,

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Let me read this to you from the RSV. I do not recommend this translation, but it is really good on 2 Cor. 3:18.

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding (the mg. says, reflecting) the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

This is evidently what the Jews say in Peter and John in

Acts 4, and what they saw in Stephen in Acts 6.

The problem with so much of our witnessing is that there is so little of Christ in it--not only in our message, but in us as the missionaries.

Concl: Now do you see what the Lord had on His heart when they prayed this prayer so long ago?

We are here because we have a job to do. But we need to know what that job is, and how the Lord expects the work to be done! Go over this prayer often. Ask the Lord to write it upon the tables of your heart. Make our Lord's requests for you and me the requests that you pray for yourself, and for all of the other believers you pray for.

Let us pray for a greater knowledge of Christ and for a greater love for the Lord Jesus Christ, that in our witness we may see, as God sees fit to use us, people being drawn to Christ, believing in Him, made new creatures.