

The Lord's Greatest Prayer, Part 6

Scripture: John 17

Code: 43-98

And now we have the opportunity to return to the 17th chapter of the gospel of John, this remarkable portion of Scripture that has really no parallel – our Lord Jesus interceding for His own before the Father. This is, in every sense, a preview that was given the very day that our Lord was crucified when He prayed this prayer, a preview of His ongoing ministry of intercession for all who belonged to Him throughout all of history. When you ask yourself, “What is the most blessed and most encouraging and most uplifting doctrine for Christians to understand?” it would come down to a very small list. For me, I can’t imagine anything more encouraging, more uplifting, more wonderful than to know that those who truly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ will finally and forever be taken into the glories of heaven, that the Lord will lose none of His.

I know there are people, there are movements, there are churches, there are denominations, there are theologies that teach that salvation can be lost, it can be temporary, it can be forfeited. That is not what the Bible teaches. Again, the most blessed and encouraging and uplifting doctrine that I know is that all who are true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ will be finally and forever taken into the glories of heaven. Such is the testimony of Scripture. And it’s not sparse testimony, we find it even back in the Old Testament as God defines His salvation as something that is everlasting.

For example, in Psalm 37 and verse 23, we read, “The steps of a man are established by the Lord, and He delights in his way. When he falls, he will not be hurled headlong, because the Lord is the One who holds his hand.” Verse 28 says, “For the Lord loves justice and does not forsake His godly ones; they are preserved forever.” It’s in Proverbs, chapter 4 and verse 18 that we read this: “But the path of the righteous is like the dawn of day, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day.” A picture of ever-increasing light until the sunrise of eternal glory.

The prophet Isaiah had much to say about the character, the nature, and the extent of salvation. In Isaiah, chapter 43, the opening part of that chapter lays down some wonderful promises. Listen to Isaiah 43:1, “But now, thus says the Lord, your Creator, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel, do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by My name; you are Mine! When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. Since you are precious in My sight, since you are honored and I love you, I will give other men in your place and other peoples in exchange for your life. Do not fear, for I am with you. I will bring your offspring from the east and gather you from the west, and I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring My sons from afar and My daughters from the ends of the earth, everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made.” The promise of God to gather all of His own beloved into the final glories of heaven.

In Isaiah 45:17, we read “Israel has been saved by the Lord with an everlasting salvation; you will not be put to shame or humiliated to all eternity.” God’s salvation is always everlasting, always eternal.

Isaiah 51:6 says, “Lift up your eyes to the sky, then look to the earth beneath; for the sky will vanish like smoke, and the earth will wear out like a garment and its inhabitants will die in like manner. But My salvation will be forever.”

The familiar and wonderful words of Isaiah, chapter 55 are known to us: “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money come, buy and eat. Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and delight yourself in abundance. Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen, that you may live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you.” God’s covenant of salvation always, always everlasting.

Jeremiah holds out the same glorious truth in Jeremiah, chapter 32. Go to the end of the chapter, verse 38. He says, “They shall be My people, and I will be their God; and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me. I will rejoice over them to do them good, and will faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul.” God gives only an everlasting salvation. There is no such thing as a temporary salvation.

Of course, we see that in the New Testament all through the writings of the gospels and all through the Epistles. Remind yourself of John 5:24, “Truly, truly – ” the Lord said “ – I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.”

And then the familiar chapter 6, verse 37, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.” Verse 39, “This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose none, but raise it up on the last day.”

And those wonderful words in the 10th chapter of John, equally familiar to us: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them. They follow Me, and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”

And beyond that, we have the 8th chapter of Romans in which the apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit says, “Nothing can ever separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ.” He begins the chapter by saying, “There will never be any condemnation to those who belong to Christ.” Philippians 1:6 says that, “The one who has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ,” the day when we see Christ face-to-face.

The confidence of the writers of the New Testament is expressed wonderfully in 2 Timothy 1:12, “For this reason – ” Paul says “ – I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believe and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I’ve entrusted to Him until that day.” And what had He entrusted to him? His own eternal soul.

A few weeks ago, we looked at 1 Peter 1 which says that “we have, as believers, obtained an inheritance – ” heavenly inheritance “ – which is imperishable, undefiled, will not fade away, and we

are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

The final benediction of Jude, we could add to the Scriptures that speak to the eternality of salvation: “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.” And the doxology is based upon the fact that He will bring us to glory.

The promise of Scripture is that God’s salvation is a forever salvation. What secures that salvation is three-fold. First of all, “the purpose of the Father, the purpose of God the Father.” The Father has purposed to call out a people for His name. The Father has purposed to secure a bride for His Son made up of redeemed humanity. This is the Father’s purpose, and “God works all things – ” Romans 8 says “ – according to His purpose. And whomever He predestines, He justifies; and whomever He justifies, He glorifies.” We are secure in the Father’s purpose.

Secondly, “We are secured by the Spirit’s presence.” Ephesians 1 says that the Spirit is the down-payment, the guarantee, the *arrabn*, the engagement ring, the security of our future glory.” It is the Father’s purpose; it is the Spirit’s presence that secures our eternal salvation.

And then, thirdly, it is “the prayers of the Son.” The purpose of the Father, the presence of the Spirit, and the prayers of the Son.

“The Lord Jesus – ” according to Hebrews 7:25 “ – ever-lives to make intercession for us.” He is praying for us for the purpose of bringing many sons to glory. And that is exactly what we are hearing in the 17th chapter of John. This chapter is the sole biblical illustration of the Lord Jesus and His mediatorial intercessory ministry as our Great High Priest, praying us into heaven, praying us into heaven. He ever-lives to make intercession for us. It goes on all the time, throughout all of redemptive history, until all the sons of God are brought to glory.

Paul in Romans 5 calls it “much more.” It is a much more work. Much more than what? Much more than the cross, much more than the resurrection. Not more important, but more extensive. Christ paid the penalty for our sins in a moment on the cross, if you will. In a few hours, He suffered the wrath of God. Christ came out of the grave in a moment and He was alive from being dead. Those were rapid accomplishments by the Lord. But now the much more work that goes on continually evermore is this work of securing us for eternal glory, praying for us, to bring us home to God.

John 17 then is a pre-ascension, pre-exaltation example of our Lord’s mediatorial intercessory ministry as the Great High Priest. He has passed through the curtains of the three heavens – we saw last week – He has entered into the heavenly Holy of Holies, and He has sat down in the Holy of Holies in the Old Testament, in the temple. Even in the new, there was no place to sit because the priests came and went. Our Great High Priest has gone into the heavenly Holy of Holies, sprinkled His own blood as an atonement for our sins, and sat down in the Father’s presence to constantly plead for His people to bring them to eternal glory. Against all of our failures, against all of our iniquities, all of our transgressions, all of our sins; against all the accusations brought against us by men and demons and Satan himself – the Lord prays us into heaven. No one is lost. This is His prayer.

In the opening five verses, He prayed for His own glory, because He had to be glorified to begin this mediatorial ministry. So in verses 1 to 5, He prays to the Father to glorify Him now that His work is done. This is early in the darkness of Friday morning. He is headed toward the cross in just a few hours. And, of course, this is Friday. By Sunday, He'll be out of the grave. Forty days after that, He will ascend into heaven and take His place in the Father's presence. He is praying for that. When He says, "The hour has come," He means the hour of His death, His resurrection, His ascension, His exaltation, and the beginning of His intercession; and here is an example of that intercession.

Now, for whom is He praying? Well, He starts out, in verses 6 and following, praying for the disciples that the Lord, God the Father, has given Him. "He's praying for the men –" verse 6 says "– whom You gave Me out of the world." But what He prays is not limited to them. Verse 20 says, "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word." And that stretches forward and backward. He is praying for all who are God's, all who will be given to Him through all of redemptive history. He is praying them all, as it were, into heaven.

Now the specific requests in His prayer are given in verses 11 to 19, verses 11 to 19. He makes the statement that He is leaving. "He is no longer –" verse 11 "– in the world; yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You." It is that setting that establishes the character of His prayer. We have to be here in this hostile, deadly, dangerous world; this world filled with sin. The 16th chapter ended by Him saying, "In the world, you have tribulation," this troubled world. We are left here; He is gone. In view of that, He is praying for us in His absence. He has already promised us that He would send the Holy Spirit. That promise is in chapter 14, repeated in 15, repeated again in 16. And that the Spirit would come and take His place, and even be better for them because He had been with them in Christ; now He would be dwelling in them personally. So He has established everything that they're going to need, including the coming of the Holy Spirit. He has filled the previous chapters on that Thursday night and Friday morning with all kinds of promises that we've been though for months and months.

But now comes the prayer that pulls it all together: "Father, fulfill all these promises. Send Your Holy Spirit –" that's behind all of this. "And, Father, these are the specific requests that I ask of You regarding My people." Starting in verse 11 and running to verse 19 is the first element of that.

Number One: "He prayed for our spiritual security," verses 11 and 12. We've been through it; we won't go back. "Keep them in Your name. Guard them." Verse 12 He says, "I guarded them; not one of them perished but the son of perdition –" Never was a son of God; that was Judas, "– that the Scripture would be fulfilled." So He says, "Father, I pray for their spiritual security, that they'll be secure all the way to glory."

Secondly, "He prayed for our spiritual unity," at the end of verse 11, "That they may be one even as we are." And we'll see more about that down deeper into the chapter – spiritual security, spiritual unity.

In verse 13, He prayed for our spiritual felicity, or joy. "Now I come to You. These things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves." Wonderful things the Lord is praying for us, for our security, for our unity; not a unity that's superficial, not a unity that is simply trying to get us all to like each other, but an internal unity of eternal life that we possess. This is the true unity of being one with Christ, and therefore, one with each other. He's praying for the reality of the body of Christ to come together, possessing divine life.

He also prays for our joy; that is a rich and wonderful thing to see. Earlier, He said that He would give us His peace. He had given us His life, and now He prays that we would have His joy, not something less than His, but His level of joy: His peace, His life, His joy, His Spirit. All of this we've been saying is ours because we are in Him. He prays for our joy in the midst of a troubled world. And we have that joy; that prayer is answered. We have joy in our salvation with all its blessings.

Fourthly, "He prayed to the Father for our spiritual immunity, immunity," "that we would be protected –" verse 15 says "– from the evil one." Verses 14, 15, and 16 speak to the fact that we are in the world; the world hates us. We are not of the world, even as our Lord was not of the world. We are in a dangerous, dangerous place, and He prays for our protection, our immunity from the devastating power of the evil one.

2 Thessalonians 3:3, "The Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. We have confidence in the Lord concerning you." That prayer will be answered. God will protect us from the evil one. As we saw last week, Satan is literally under our feet because we are in Christ.

Now, all of these prayers for spiritual stability, spiritual unity, spiritual felicity, spiritual immunity, spiritual security, all the way to spiritual immunity – all of these are motivated by love, 13:1, "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the max." All of this is essentially a prayer for us based on divine love. We have been loved by God from the beginning of the world. We have been loved by God everlastingly. He loved us before we existed; He loves us now; He will love us forever. It's all driven by divine love, and you see that even more at the end of the chapter, how we're swept up in this amazing reality of divine love; not because we're deserving of that love, earned that love. It is purely a gift of God's infinite grace.

Then there's one final request that our Lord has. In this section, He prays for our spiritual purity, our spiritual purity. Out of love for us also, He prays for our sanctification. Let's look at verse 17.

"Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth." Very simple words, but a very direct focused and profound point is being made here.

First of all, the issue is sanctification. Sanctify – mentioned in verse 17. Sanctify, sanctified – twice in verse 19. Three times we see that verb. The verb carries the action. This is a prayer for our sanctification. He prays for our holiness.

Now, sanctification is kind of a stained glass word; it's a churchy word. What it essentially means is "separation," set apart from what? From sin. He's praying that we would be set apart from sin. Hence, He's praying for our purity, for our purity.

This is also an encouraging, wonderfully exciting element of our Lord's prayer. Like praying for our joy, He prays also for our purity – for our continual separation from sin and increasing godliness. While we are on the way to heaven, while we are on the journey to get to heaven, He prays that we will be being sanctified. We will become increasingly more holy in practice as we are in position. He prays according to the Father's will and according to the Spirit's work. It is the Father's will that we be holy; it is the Spirit's work to make us holy, to conform us to holiness; it is the Son's petition that we

become holy.

Now, this prayer deals with our human flesh. We have three enemies: the world, the devil, and the flesh. We've already heard about the world, and Jesus prayed that we'd be protected from the world. We've heard about the devil, the evil one; and Jesus prayed that we would be protected from the evil one. Here He prays that we will be victorious over the ever-present flesh. It is the flesh, that humanness in which we are still incarcerated even though we're a believer.

In verse 17 He says, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." "Set them apart from sin; separate them from evil." And that is a practical prayer. The apostles and all believers have been separated from the penalty of sin. Jesus paid the penalty; we're never going to see that penalty. We'd been separated from the penalty of sin. One day when we enter into heaven, we will be separated from the presence of sin. His death separated us from the penalty; His resurrection separated us from the presence of sin in the future in heaven; and in the middle, we are now in need of being separated from the power of sin, the power of sin. Here on earth, the work of separation from the power of sin is a lifelong progressive work of God. He is speaking of already regenerated, already justified, already converted followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, being continually made more holy.

That is our Lord's prayer, that we who are still sinful are loved by Him with a perfect, heavenly love; and that love calls out from His heart a prayer for our sanctification. He accepts us in our imperfections and prays for us to become more holy. And what is the means of that? What is the means of that? Very clear: "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." He says it again at the end of verse 19, "that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth."

Where is the truth found? It's the revelation of God; it's the Scripture; it's the Bible. It is as we immerse ourselves in the Word of God that we are in the place where sanctification operates. As we immerse ourselves in the knowledge of the Word of God, in the interpretation, the accurate interpretation of the Word of God; not only in terms of understanding, but affection, loving the truth. It is in being, as it were, immersed in Scripture, that sanctification takes place by the Holy Spirit.

This is not something mystical. This isn't something in the air. This isn't something that happens to you when you sit in a corner and contemplate your spiritual navel. This is only going to happen in our lives. Progressive sanctification, progressive separation from sin, as we look at the Word of God; and as we read it, understand it, embrace it, and love it.

Second Corinthians 3:18 often quoted, "We all with unveiled face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord." The glass is Scripture. As we look with the veil off, clear-sighted now since we have been redeemed, we look into the glass of Scripture, we see the glory of the Lord; and in seeing that glory, we are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord to Spirit. As you gaze at the revelation of the glory of the Lord manifest particularly in Christ in the Scripture, that look, that gaze, that preoccupation with Christ, the Spirit of God uses to conform you to the very image of Christ, moving you from one level of glory to the next, to the next, to the next. Sanctification.

The psalmist simply put it this way, Psalm 119:11, "Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin, that I might not sin." Peter said, "As babes desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." Prior to that, he'd said, "laying aside all evil."

The Word of God works against the sin that remains in us. The Word of God reveals the glory of Christ in all His beauty; and as we are caught up in that glory, and we see it and understand it and believe it and love it, the Spirit uses all of that to make us more and more and more like Christ. Paul's telling the Philippian, "This is the goal, to be like Christ. This is the prize of the high calling, to be like Christ. And now before we get to that reality, we pursue that, even in this life."

Why is this important? It's important – look at verse 18. It's important for the very reason that we're in the world. "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world." It's important because we have a mission to accomplish, and holiness is critical to that mission: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your works, good works, and glorify your Father who's in heaven."

You've got to put the gospel on display. You've got to put the power of God on display. And if we're going through the world saying, "The Lord changes lives; the Lord transforms sinners; the Lord takes evil people and makes them good," you're going to have some illustrations of that or somebody's going to say, "Why would I believe that?"

We have a Great Commission, Matthew 28, "We're sent into all the world to preach the gospel to everyone, to make disciples, to baptize, to teach them all things whatsoever I have commanded, to have them embrace the gospel, to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the world. And what is going to make our witness believable is the transformation in our lives." Matthew 5, "You're salt; you're light." Philippians, "You're holding forth the truth like lights." First Peter, "You're a holy people, confronting an unholy world."

So our Lord says, "The Father sent Me, the Son, into the world, the Holy Son; and now I, the Son, am sending you into the world. The Father sent Me into the world in the power of the Spirit. I'm sending you into the world in the power of the Spirit. The Father sent Me to manifest a holy life to put His glory on display that His message might be believed. I send you in the power of the Holy Spirit to live a holy life, also to put His glory through the gospel on display." So the objective in sanctification is to be as much like Christ as we can possibly be, that's why we focus on His glory.

Now, verse 19 is a very striking verse that pulls this together for us. Our Lord says something very unusual: "For their sakes, for their sakes, I sanctify Myself." Does it strike you that there was something Jesus had to do to sanctify Himself? Would it not seem to you that this was something automatic for an absolutely holy, eternal being? But that holiness, that eternal holiness was maintained in some inexplicable way by the very purpose and intension of the Son of God.

"I sanctify Myself." Why would He sanctify Himself? Two reasons, theologically speaking. Reason Number One: "He needed to live a perfect life." He needed to live a perfectly holy life. Why? Because there had to be at least one perfect holy life lived by someone in the history of the world, and He's the only one. Why is that important? Because when you put your trust in Jesus Christ, that perfect life is credited to your account; it's as if you lived His life.

That's the doctrine of imputation, 2 Corinthians 5:21. That's how we become the righteousness of God in Christ, literally. We have His perfect life credited to us. It's as if we lived His life. There had to be a life that could be credited to us, to make us acceptable to God. It had to be a perfect life; and

His was. So He had to live a perfect life. He had to sanctify Himself in perfect holiness, so that that perfect life could be accredited to us by grace.

But, secondly, He had to live a perfectly holy life, not only so that it could be imputed to us, but as an example to us, as an example to us. We have His perfect, righteous life imputed to us, covering us – that's justification. We have His perfect, righteousness characterizing us, granted to us, and that's sanctification. Christ covers me – His life covers me, His death covers my sin, His life covers me – but His life is also an example to me of sanctification. In justification, my position is taken care of. In sanctification, my practice is dealt with.

So let's look at that second aspect. Our Lord is saying here, "I sanctify Myself for their sakes, that they themselves may be sanctified in truth." So He's not praying about justification here; He's not praying about that. He's praying about the sanctification process that every believer goes through in the application of divine truth. He's saying, "I do it Myself so that they will have an example, someone to look to."

Now, what does it mean? What is He saying? Our Lord established what sanctification is. What is sanctification? Perfect sanctification, perfect obedience, motivated by perfect love, okay. Sanctification is perfect obedience, motivated by perfect love. The Lord Jesus was perfectly obedient to the Father out of perfect love. He loved the Father perfectly, He loved the Father to the full capacity that He has the power as eternal God to love, and He obeyed perfectly. Again, perfect sanctification is perfect obedience to God's holy will. Perfect obedience to God's holy will, motivated by perfect love. Jesus loved the Father, loved the Father perfectly, obeyed the Father perfectly.

Just a quick run again through the gospel of John, chapter 4, verse 34. He gives this testimony over and over. He says, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, to do the will of Him who sent Me to accomplish His work." Complete commitment to the will of the Father.

Chapter 5, verse 17, He says, "My Father is working now, and I Myself am working. I work along with the Father." They were shocked by that kind of statement because He was saying, "God is His Father –" verse 18 says "– making Himself equal with God." Then He replied in verse 19, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself. He can do nothing of Himself."

Therein lies the impeccability of Christ. He doesn't do anything independent of God – nothing, He can't. It's impossible. He cannot sin. He can do nothing of Himself. It has to be something He sees the Father doing, for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does, and He does them in the same manner." In verse 30, "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

Chapter 6, verse 38, "I've come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." Chapter 7, verse 18, "He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory. He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him." He seeks the Father's glory, only does what the Father does, only does the Father's will, never does anything else.

In the 8th chapter of John and verse 28, Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me." And verse 29, chapter 8, "He who has sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone. I always do

the things that are pleasing to Him.” That is why the Father says, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am – ” what? “ – well-pleased.”

That’s perfect sanctification. Perfect motive; pure love. Perfect obedience; pure, righteous behavior in every aspect. And our Lord is saying, “I’m sanctifying Myself and putting it on display for their sakes.” You want to know what sanctification is? Look at Christ. It’s perfect love, operating in perfect obedience.

Now, where does the power for this come from? Where does the power for this come from? You might say, “Well, the Lord Jesus had His own power.” That is true. But do you remember that in the incarnation, He set aside the independent use of His attributes and submitted Himself to the Father’s will and the Spirit’s power.

Listen to what Isaiah says way back in Isaiah 11, speaking of Messiah, “The one who will come from the stem of Jesse, the branch from the roots of Jesse will bear fruit.” This is what defines Him: “The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And He will delight in the fear of the Lord.” In other words, His delight in worshiping God, honoring God perfect will come because He will have the fullness of the Holy Spirit, the sevenfold fullness of the Holy Spirit in His life.

In the 61st chapter of Isaiah, another familiar text, messianic text speaking of the Lord, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me.” And you remember in Luke, chapter 4, in the synagogue at Nazareth He said, “Today I am here to fulfill that. The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me.”

So the question is this: “By what power did Jesus offer God perfect love and perfect obedience?” Answer: “By the power of the Holy Spirit.”

In Matthew 12, when they called Him a devil, He said, “You blasphemed the Holy Spirit who is doing this work through Me.” You might want to recall the 10th chapter of the book of Acts and verse 38: “You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. We’re witnesses of all the things He did.” He was anointed with the Holy Spirit and power. Christ is a model for us: perfect love, perfect obedience, empowered by the Holy Spirit. That’s sanctification. That’s the perfect sanctification.

So when our Lord says to the disciples, “It’s better that I go away, because I’m going to send the Holy Spirit. He has been with you in Me, but now He will be in you.” Who is the model of sanctification? It’s Christ, and we see it in perfect: perfect love, perfect obedience, empowered by the Holy Spirit. That’s sanctification.

So what about us? Well, there’s one simple command that relates to our sanctification, and it’s maybe a good one to sum up. It’s in 1 John 2; 1 John 2, verse 6, “The one who says he abides in Him – ” you say you abide in Christ? “ – ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.” Oh, so that’s sanctification, right, walk like Christ, walk like Christ.

Walk? What do you mean walk? Walk simply means steady, continual, constant progression against

enemies, opposition, odds, conflict. Walk.

New Testament is just loaded with the word “walk” describing the Christian life. We are described as walking in new life, walking decently, walking worthily, walking in unity, walking in humility, walking in purity, walking in contentment, walking in faith, walking in good works, walking in separation, walking in love, walking in light, walking in wisdom, walking in truth. That’s Jesus, and that’s why John says, “Walk like Jesus. If you say you are in Him, if you say you abide in Him and it’s true, then walk like He walked.” Listen to Colossians 2:6, “Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, walk in Him.” Follow His pattern; follow His life.

We know what sanctification is, it’s Christ. And, again, we go back to 2 Corinthians 3:18. As you look at Him and see His glory, you know exactly how to walk. Walk in love to God. Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength like He did; that’s the goal. Obey the Lord in everything: everything you do, everything you say, everything you think. Be pleasing to Him.

Yes, He is your righteousness in that you are covered by His holiness in your justification. But He is also your example of righteousness, a pattern to be followed in your practice and in your sanctification. So He not only prays for our purity, but He knows it’s tough, because we have remaining flesh, we’re living in a hostile world, the evil one after us; and He prays us into the only means by which this sanctification can take place, and that is being immersed in the divine Word of God, the Scripture.

As you study the Scripture, as the Scripture, to borrow Paul’s words, “dwells in you richly,” you will be walking in the Spirit, and you will be walking the way Christ walked. You will know the Scripture, believe the Scripture, love the Scripture; and that’s the path to Christlikeness. What an amazing statement for our Lord to make: “I sanctify Myself for their sakes.” Positionally by imputing His life to us; practically by providing an example for us. In the one, we are justified; in the second, we are being sanctified.

“Father, I pray for their spiritual purity.” That prayer was on the heart of the apostle Paul. He desperately wanted to present the people that he had ministered to, to God as a pure people. He wanted a people that he called a “chaste virgin espoused to Christ.” Any pastor has this prayer on his heart all the time for his own life and those he serves. Any believer should be driven by this same desire. It involves looking at Christ; it also involves looking at sin honestly in our own lives and being willing to turn from it, cleansing ourselves of all filthiness of the flesh, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. It’s all the Holy Spirit’s power, but it takes all of our commitment as well. We’re here as a church to help you in that, to serve you by giving you the Word of God, providing all the resources for you to know, and have conviction and believe things that are going to cause you to behave in a way that honors God. That’s the ministry the church has. There is more in this chapter that is equally rich, and we’ll look at what’s yet to come the next couple of weeks.

Father, we’re so grateful. As we think about these things, we feel like we’re just touching the edge, the hem of the garment. There’s so much here. So helpful to see the clarity and consistency with which the Bible explains itself, comparing scripture with scripture. And we know that You are Your own interpreter, that Your Word interprets itself by its own consistency. We see in it the very divine mind coming through with such clarity. Thank You for what You have given to us by way of the vision of Christ – there’s so much of Him in the Scripture, so much of Him – so that we can gaze at Your glory as manifest in Him, and be changed into His image.

Lord, we look forward to the day when we will see Him as He is, as John says, "And we will be like Him." We will be like Him. We'll have a body like unto His glorified body. We will be like Him; that is righteous and holy and eternal, pure. What a promise. That is the prize of the upward call. We long for that day, but we desire to see the answers to our Lord's prayer in our lives even now, that we would be sanctified as we look to Him as our example. These things we ask for His glory. Amen.

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