

The High Priestly Prayer

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Date: 30 July 2025

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John 17 and verse 15. John 17 and verse 15. John 17 and verse 15. John 17 and verse 15. And he said to the Lord, oh, just take me away. It's interesting that a man who prayed to the Lord to be taken away never saw death because the Lord one day just took him.
And it also we find that the likes of Peter, he so was overcome with a wonder of the transfiguration.
When he was up on the mountain with James and John and when Christ was transfigured and the manifestation of the presence of glory was so great that he just wanted to continue there.
He wanted that they would build little tabernacles for themselves, that they would just continue to live there forever. Peter was a married man, probably a family. He had worked down on earth, but he had no thought about these things.
[4:46] The glory was so great that he just wanted to continue there forever. And there have been times when God's people have experienced unusual blessing.
And they probably, like Peter, said, Lord, just take me away. Because it's like everything in this world has faded. And there is just such a great sense of the glory and the wonder of the Lord.
But the fact of the matter is that Jesus is praying that we will remain here in the world. And what a blessing for the world. Can you imagine what the world would be like?
That Christ is taken away, crucified and taken. And that every person who comes to faith. Imagine what this world would be like. The moment that you come to faith, you're taken away.
So that the world would be bereft of every voice speaking about the Lord Jesus Christ. All the prayers gone.
[5:48] All the witnessing gone. So God's people are to remain here. And we're to remain here as witnesses. And the amazing thing is that the Lord, in his wisdom, has used us, feeble, inadequate, frail, to preach, to teach, to witness, to share, to serve.
Because every person who comes to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is involved in serving the Lord, in witnessing for the Lord, in sharing the gospel.
It becomes very clear here of that. And this is how the gospel spreads. This is how the gospel grows. So these disciples, the first disciples, of course, were going to be witnesses to the death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And they were going to go out preaching this. They were first-hand witnesses of it. It wasn't hearsay on their part. They had seen. They had seen the risen Lord. They had been accompanied Jesus.

And they had heard from Jesus. They were commissioned by the risen Jesus to go out with the word. And so it is for us as well, although we didn't witness what the disciples and the apostles witnessed, we also are commanded to live and to witness.

[7:12] We're to be salt. We're to be light in a dark world, in a rotting world. We are to bring our influence to bear upon society.

And the means by which we are to do this, Jesus makes it very clear to us because he goes on to say, as he says, They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth. So this is the means, of course. But before that, when he says, I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

Now, you and I know the havoc that Satan wrecks in this world. And he is out all the time to disturb our peace.

He's out all the time to create havoc within the church. We're told how Satan entered Judas' heart before he went to betray Jesus.

[8:19] And I'm sure Peter, every day of his life, reflected upon what he did. Peter, who was so resolute, so strong, so courageous.

Peter, who meant it when he said to Jesus, I'm ready to go to death with you. I'm ready. I'm willing to go to prison for you. I would give my life for you, Jesus.

But Jesus, remember, warned him that Satan had desires after him. Satan has desired to have you, Peter. But I prayed for you that your faith won't fail.

And when Satan got a hold of Peter, what did he do? Well, Peter, to his dying day, would never forget how he denied Jesus, his Lord, who he loved with oaths and with curses.

I don't know him. He means nothing to me. Peter would say, I can't believe that I did that. And I'm sure we've all, at one time or another, as Christians said, I can't believe I did that.

[9:24] I can't believe I spoke in that way. I cannot believe that I did that, how I have let my Lord down. And that's why, later on, Peter, writing, and he knows all about Satan's power and strategy, says, he warns us that Satan goes about like a roaring lion, prowling about, seeking whom he may devour.

And every Christian is marked. And the more you do for the Lord, the more you're marked. And he's out to get you. He's out to get you in your own personal life. He's out to get you in your home life.

He's out to get you in your church life. He's out to get you. Let's not kid ourselves about that. And every so often, we become conscious of his attacks upon us.

But thank the Lord that our Lord is stronger and that our Lord will defend us. And he has promised to defend us. But Satan is out to spoil our walk, to bring dishonor on the cause, all these sort of things.

So Jesus is praying about this very thing. And he's saying, keep them from, keep them from the evil one. Now, of course, some, you might find some translations doesn't have one.

[10:45] It just says, keep from evil. And everything that we say about the evil one is true. And even if it just said evil, well, that includes the evil one, but also involves all the evil that's within us and all the evil that is around us.

It's like the Lord's Prayer. Remember how we ask, deliver us from evil. And so Jesus, aware that the disciples and all subsequent disciples in this world are going to be his witnesses, he says, sanctify them in the truth.

Your word is truth. That's what Jesus says. Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth. Now, to sanctify really means to set apart.

That's its first and foremost thing. It's the same, really, as you could have in verse 19, where Jesus says, I consecrate myself.

It's to set apart. And, you know, the moment you're born again, God has set you apart. You read in the Old Testament about how the priests and so they were set apart by God.

[12:00] Well, you are set apart by God in this world. The moment you're born again, you're sanctified. That's what theologians will distinguish in sanctification.

They'll say there's definitive sanctification, which is a once and for all, which happens the moment you're justified, you're also sanctified. But then there's what they term progressive, ongoing sanctification.

And we know that that is so part of what Jesus is praying for here. Yes, you're set apart. You're set apart. You're set apart for the Lord.

And the Lord is going to see to it that you are prepared and being prepared to be his witnesses in this world. Because it is only as we are molded in the world and shaped in the world and built in the world that we can be effective evangelists.

You see, the world looks at the Christian. Where does the world see Christ? If the world doesn't have a Bible, where does the world see Christ? The world sees Christ in the Lord's people.

[13:11] And if we resemble the world, if we're just like the world in our actions and in everything we're about, then the world doesn't take note of anything.

But if they see the attitude of the Christian and the lifestyle of the Christian being different, then that's going to make them sit up and take note.

Being exactly like the world, the world says, well, what's the point in Christianity? It's just what I have. But when they might see the Christian in the way that they react to tragedy, in the way they react to trial, in the way they react to difficult circumstances in life, in the way they react by word, by action.

And they see it as different to others. That makes them think. That's what causes the world to take note. And that's why the Lord says the very key to evangelism, the key to witnessing, the key to serving me in this world is being sanctified, is being built up in the faith.

And that's why the word of God has to be key to our lives. You can never be with the word of God without it having an impact. I find that at a personal level whenever I say I'm going to preach anywhere.

[14:41] And with the word, you read, you write, you pray, you reflect, you meditate, all these things. And you discover what the word says, that those who water will be watered.

So that even in the studying of God's word, you can never study God's word without deriving benefit from it. And it's not just in preaching, but in anything that you're going to do.

If it's in the Sunday school or in a youth fellowship or at the club or whatever you're doing when you're handling God's word and seeking to take out of it for others, it will do its own work in your own heart and in your own life.

That's what the nature of it. You cannot be in the word without deriving benefit. And the more you're in it, the more it will influence who you are and what you do.

And you know when you see a really fast flowing stream. It's rushing down and it's been running down for years and years. A really fast flowing river.

[15 : 47] And you'll find that the stones there that over the years begin to get smoothed. Maybe the rough is being smoothed away a bit by the fast flowing force of the river.

And that's what happens with us as well. That the rough within our lives, as the word is flowing through our spiritual veins, begins to remove the rough and smooth us and shape us and mould us more so that we begin to resemble our Lord and our Saviour.

Now obviously as we go along, we don't feel it. And very often the more mature you get, the less you sometimes say, oh, you look back and say, oh, I thought I would have grown so much by now, but I feel that I haven't.

And we often look back. But we know that we have come on. We have gone. We're further on than when we started. The thing is that sometimes when we look back to when we began, the sense of newness, the sense of wonder was so great.

And the thrill in our heart was such that we sometimes say, oh, I'm not there. No, you're not there. You're further on. You have grown.

[17 : 08] You have developed. God's word. Even if you don't know it. But it's through the word that we come to know God. Who by searching the question is asked in scripture can find God?

Well, we find him in the word. This holy revelation of himself is here. God's word is the manual for our lives on how we are to live in this world.

and so Jesus is praying for his people because then he says in the next verse as you sent me into the world so I have sent them into the world see this is the way the Lord works first he says come come to me come to me him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out the great invitation is to come and you tonight you've come you look back and you've come but once you've come his next thing is go you're to go out into the world and to tell what great things the Lord has done every day you're a living witness and we've got to remember that we're living witnesses being read scripture tells us we're being read by the world around us you remember Legion the man who was possessed by so many demons and Jesus cast the demons out and when Jesus was leaving Legion pleaded

I said Lord Jesus can I go with you he wanted to go with Jesus because of what Jesus had done for him but Jesus said no go home and tell what great things the Lord has done for you Legion's work having come to embrace Jesus as Savior was to go back home and to be a witness there and to tell people of what Jesus had done and Jesus is saying the same thing to you and to me and you and I know that home is often the hardest place to witness because people know you the best they know you who you really are but we're commanded to go and the command it's a command to go it gives this to all people and it's not an option Jesus doesn't say to us well go and live for me and witness for me if you feel up to it or if you want to know it's not an option it is what we're given to do it's what we become because remember what Jesus has done here we go back we've said that and for their sake I consecrate myself Jesus set himself apart for us Jesus consecrated what he says myself in other words the entirety of my whole being my emotions my affections my will my spiritual life my physical life my mental life the entirety of all of who I am I consecrate I sanctify I give myself for you for me it's not incredible he held nothing back and surely it's the least that we can do for him is to go out as he says go and tell and remember there's our beautiful reward because you and I will never know in this world the impact that our life for good may have because often we think it's not going to happen but you know it's amazing how very often when people will talk about how they came to faith it's amazing the amount of people who have had an influence upon the journey to faith people at home people at work people in the community people here people there people there people that they knew they'll say oh well he his life her life there's there's so many factors come into it it's all part of it's all part of this ministry all part of this service that we do to the Lord Jesus Christ and remember at the end of the day it tells us those who turn many to righteousness shall shine like the stars forever and ever how we thank the Lord for this prayer and you know it's this prayer is continually being answered it's been answered right up to tonight and remember that when the Lord sends you out he doesn't send you out there you go out on your own on you go it's his work it's not your work it's his work it's a shared work so he's saying I want you to do my work in this world because without you the world the world doesn't know of me so you make known who I am every single day what a privilege we have what a responsibility but always remember that the strength is from the Lord we cannot do it in our own strength and remember the heartbeat of it all is the word be much in the word be much in prayer

sanctify them in the truth your word is truth let us pray Lord we give thanks for your word and we give thanks for this great high priestly prayer where we're given a little glimpse of our saviour where he's pouring out his heart to his father and we give thanks that this is a prayer that has been answered and continues to be answered and we pray to bless us and grant us all grace in our daily witness in our walk before others and our walk before you forgive us oh Lord for how often we let you down we're not what we want to be we're not what we should be but we give thanks Lord that we're not what we once were and so we pray that every day that we will have our eyes fixed upon you that the word might be our daily bread that every day we will be equipped by your word bless us in and do us good pray for those who mourn who are sad at this time we remember the late Annables family Lord we give thanks for her wonderful life of service here and elsewhere and so we pray tonight for Catherine and for Alistair and for Hamish and their families we pray that you will bless all who mourn all who are sad all who have gone through harrowing and difficult times bless them we pray take us all to our home safely and cleanse us from our every sin in Jesus name we ask it amen we're going to