

Connecting Minds

"These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31)

The Gospel of John

Chapter 17:15-17

"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."

"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world..." We've been looking at the hatred the world will express towards true believers in Christ when they stand for the truth. In our last lesson, we looked at the question "Do we not wish sometimes that God would take us out of the world?" To have such a desire does not mean that we are not a Christian. Trials and tribulations are times of great testing. Even the saints in the Bible have at times wished to leave this fallen world... some for good reasons, most for less than good reasons.

Elijah wished to be taken out of this world (read 1 Kings 19:1-4). He feels that he is the only one left and he doesn't understand why God is working in such a strange way with regard to Ahab and Jezebel. Jonah wished for this too (read Jonah 4:1-3). Jonah acted contrary to God because he hated the Ninevites. And when he was forced to do God's work he didn't like the result and wished to die. The apostle Paul even desired it (read Philippians 1:23). Paul loved God and wanted to be with Him in heaven.

These three men had a desire at one point to leave this world. But this one request of these three men was not granted at the time they asked. And here, in our text for today, Jesus prays that we would not be taken out of the world. So what can be the purpose of God in this? Jesus says that we are the salt and light of the world (Matthew 5:13,14). By our presence in this world we act as a purifying agent and flavour enriching body. We also shine the light of truth

In that same passage in Matthew (5:15,16) we are told that we bring glory to the Father by our presence in this world – "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and *glorify your Father in*

heaven...” Our chief end is to glorify God in whatever circumstances we find ourselves in.

God has not left us unprotected in this world. I pray “that You should keep them...” The interesting thing is the wording Jesus uses. The NIV says “To protect them from the evil one.” The better translation is the NKJV which says “To *keep* them from the evil one...” The Greek word for “keep” is *tereo* and it means to keep a watch. Acts 25:21 says Paul was “kept” under Roman guard. Peter says that the fallen angels are “reserved” (*tereo*) for judgment. His prayer is for the Father to watch them, to watch believers, so that they do not fall into the devil’s schemes. Keep them under guard.

Here’s the message: It is not so much that the Father is keeping the devil away from touching us. Just as we are not taken out of the world and its sinful influences, so the devil can still accuse us and tempt us to sin. But Jesus asks that the Father would watch us, guard us, keep us from these sins. And God prepares us for not falling by His word – “Sanctify them by Your truth...” Jesus prays that the Father will strengthen us by the word of truth.

So again, here we are in this fallen world. We are hated because of our allegiance to Christ. We face the world’s allures and the devil’s temptations. Jesus prays that we be kept from indulging in these, “keep *them* from the evil one...” In times of trial and temptation, how comforting to know that the Father is working to keep us from evil.

TableTalk

Read these other passages for more reasons as to why God leaves us in the world and doesn’t just take us to glory the moment we believe. James 1:3,4,12, Malachi 3:3 and John 17:18.

“Sanctify them by Your truth...” Simple question. How important is it that we be studying the word of God?