

Session 5

November 11, 2018

PRAYING FOR OTHERS

Matthew 6:11b; John 17:11-23

The responsibility of any priest is to mediate; to stand in the gap between sinful man and holy God and offer reconciliation. Part of the act of mediation is intercession, when the priest intervenes on behalf of the people, making their case before God. As our great High Priest, Jesus is our perfect mediator. He stood in the gulf separating man from God, offering Himself as a sacrifice on our behalf. Even now, Jesus continues His priestly work by interceding on our behalf, continually pleading our case before the Father (see Heb 7:25; Rom. 8:34; 1 John 2:1). And as always, Jesus is our role model.

In His *High Priestly Prayer*, just prior to His crucifixion (John 17), Jesus takes the time to pray for His disciples as well as those who would come to Him through their testimony (v. 20). That means that on the night Jesus was betrayed, He prayed for us!

He prayed for our security (vv. 11-15). The unfolding events of that night made it clear that while Jesus would suffer an excruciating death, His disciples were far from safe. Jesus was completing His work, but the disciples' work was only just beginning. Three times in this section, Jesus prays for their protection. First, He prays that their *relationship* would be protected. The phrases in verse 11, uttered under the emotional duress of the evening, are difficult to punctuate, but the basic idea is clear: that they might be preserved in perfect fellowship. The goal is "that they may be [remain] one as We are one." The phrase "by Your name" invokes all that the name of God represents: His power, grace, mercy, etc. Second, He prays for their *security* (v. 12). Apart from Judas Iscariot, the betrayer destined by God to fulfill the Scripture, those disciples God gave to Jesus were "kept;" their redemption secure. Third, Jesus prayed that their *purity* would be protected (v. 15). The easiest way to do so would be to simply remove them from the miry pit of this world. But that would undermine the very purpose for which they were gathered! Rather than *isolation*, Christ prayed for their *insulation*. The varying translation "from the evil" or "from the evil one" makes no difference. The request is that they would remain untarnished by the penetrating stain of this world (see also 1 John 5:18).

He prayed for our separation (vv. 16-20). Jesus told His disciples they were not "of the world" already in John 15:19 and again in verse 14 of our focal passage. Their separation from the world is the reason they will be hated by the world. But rather than pray that they would be accepted by the world, Jesus prayed that their separation would increase! That's the root idea of *sanctification*. Their sanctification would come through God's truth (v. 17) and through Christ's example. That's the most likely meaning of Christ first sanctifying Himself (through His obedience unto death on the cross) "so they also may be sanctified by the truth" (v. 19). Again, Christ's prayer was that these new believers (and all who would come to Christ because of their witness) would not fall back into the wicked worldliness from which they had been delivered (see also 1 John 2:15ff). This would not be accomplished by the strength of their will, but by the sanctification of His word.

He prayed for our singularity (vv. 21-23). The prayer for unity is completed here. "May they all be one" refers to the disciples as well as to those who would come because of their testimony

(v. 20). The *object* of this prayer for unity, then, is the whole church. The *model* of unity is the whole Godhead (vv. 21-23). The *purpose* of this unity is as a witness to the world (vv. 21, 23).

With such an encouraging prayer on our behalf, we would do well to adopt the attitude of Samuel in regard to interceding for others: “As for me, I vow that I will not sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you” (1 Samuel 12:23).