

“Sanctify them by the Truth; Your Word is Truth!”

✠ **Protected by the Father’s power (vv.11b-12)**

✠ **Filled up with the joy of Jesus (vv.13-19)**

In the name of Jesus, our soul-sanctifying Savior and Friend, dear witnesses of God’s Truth:

On the American frontier, settlers were known by their occupation often in their name. Leave your horse with “Smitty,” the blacksmith, right next to Traveler Freight and Carrier. Stop at John and Mary Baker’s for bread and get documents signed at Scribble T. Lawyer’s. Mr. Hunter and Mr. Fisher? Sporting goods, but not much of either at Parson’s. That’s where you go for prayers.

Yet Jesus tells His disciples, *“You will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.”* (John 16:26f NIV) Jesus is saying, “You will all pray directly to the Father in my name.” Blacksmith and baker, lawyer and notary public, sportsmen all, yes, even the parson needs Jesus to teach us to pray. Friend Jesus powers our prayers and scrubs them clean with His own prayer: **“Sanctify them by the Truth; Your Word is Truth!”** Jesus sends us into the world as His witnesses promising to be with us all the days until the goal of the ages (Matthew 28:19f) because we are...

✠ **Protected by the Father’s power (vv.11b-12)**

Ever have your favorite team “not show up”? Some modern Bible translations seem to lose heart too. Imagine reading the text like this: “Holy Father, ~~obey~~ them by the power of your name....While I was with them, I ~~obeyed~~ them and ~~obeyed~~ them by that name you gave meMy prayer is...that you ~~obey~~ them from the evil one”? (vv.11f, 15 NIV) “Obey” is how modern translations like the NIV slavishly render the *treasuring* and *guarding* words (τηρεω, φυλασσω) in other passages. Remember Jesus? *“Blessed...are those who hear the word of God and obey it,”* says the NIV. At least the KJV was right in its day: *“Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.”* (Luke 11:28) In King James’ English, a “keep” was a tower where the *keeper kept* royal jewels and prisoners. Jesus is not asking the Father to ~~obey~~ us, but for God to *guard* and *protect* us. Likewise, He wants us to *guard* and *treasure* God’s Word for this *“sword of the Spirit”* (Ephesians 6:17) keeps us **Protected by the Father’s power.**

The stakes in our battle through life are much higher than a world championship. On the line is your immortal soul, whether you and I spend eternity with God in heaven or tortured by the devil in the waterless fire pit of hell. Only hours before He spread His hands to let them nail Him to the cross, Jesus was pouring out His heart in prayer to His heavenly Father for us: *“Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.”*

How good is your name? Good enough to keep you working in these hard times? Important enough for you to put on your best clothes for interviews and write a memorable resume? Jesus wants us to see God’s name-reputation on the line for our eternal wellbeing. Jesus writes the report on Judas and nails the bad reputation of His betrayer by calling him more literally, *“the son of perdition”* (KJV) or *“that lost one.”* (NETNT) Jesus also warned His other disciples that they would all run away because of Him. Jesus came *“to seek and to save what was lost.”* (Luke 19:10) And *“lost”* we all are by nature. That’s why Jesus kept warning His disciples that their salvation would require His shameful death on the cross. But they did not want to hear it. God knows, neither do we.

God says what He means in writing to erase all confusion. Should anyone doubt that ***“we must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God”*** (Acts 14:22 NIV)? Why are we surprised when worldlings in the media pounce on politicians who confessed allegiance to Jesus Christ, or beauty contestants who believe in the traditional, Biblical view of marriage? Christians are shedding blood for Christ all over the world. Jesus said, ***“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*** (John 16:33 NIV) How sinful for us to keep seeking after good days and vain glory. What disloyalty when we fail to take up our cross and follow Jesus. But Jesus’ prayer, ***“Sanctify them by the Truth; Your Word is Truth!”*** comforts us that we are **Protected by the Father’s power**. Jesus’ eternal goal is far beyond earth’s end zone. As Christ sends us, He also comforts us with the fact that God wants us...

Filled up with the joy of Jesus (vv.13-19)

Often our attitude wants to rewrite Jesus’ prayer. Jesus reveals in His *Sermon on the Mount*: ***“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*** (Matthew 5:11f NIV) But who of us feels ***“blessed,”*** much less bursting with joy as we look forward to heaven in the midst of painful persecution?

Sickness and sorrow have a way of exposing the dross of our faith, impurities that float to the top on our heartaches and tears. Yet our Lord commands us, ***“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.”*** (Hebrews 12:5f NIV) So nearsighted are we with our troubles that we miss the long view our Lord is accomplishing for us forever. ***“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.”*** (2 Corinthians 4:17 NIV)

Our Lord Jesus sends us as His witnesses out of love for souls that still need to hear God’s Word, for ***“faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.”*** (Romans 10:17) Jesus knew the one way to our happy home in heaven went by way of the cross. So He prayed all the harder: ***“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.”*** God strengthens us to win with Jesus. He knows the score. ***“They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.”***

A collector’s classic Mustang is not meant for off-road mud. Old golf shoes are fine for aerating your lawn, but to caddy for Tiger Woods spring for a new pair. We set apart things for special purposes. By His Word God ***“sanctifies”*** us for Himself, as Christ’s witnesses to the world. Next time you’re feeling useless and unwanted, think of this: You are God’s gift to Jesus. Your health and wellbeing are His passion. His hands and feet hold battle scars of victory for you and every single soul you know.

The story is told of a little boy who saw a puppy in the pet store. It kept coming over to him and no one else. Afterward, the little guy could dream of nothing but buying that puppy. Those were the days when parents did not spoil their children with everything they wanted. They were fortunate not to have much money. So the boy worked several jobs to earn enough to buy his friend. He had never been happier than when he brought him home. He was never more devastated than when it ran away. But he looked and looked until found it in another pet store. More hard work finally raised enough to reclaim his companion. Imagine how he held that little dog. ***“I bought you twice! I’m never letting go of you!”***

If a boy can love his puppy so, think how dearly God loves you. First He created you, but you ran away into sin. Yet His Spirit could not stop looking until He found you. And it cost His Son’s life to buy you back. So dearly, dearly you are redeemed by His holy, precious blood. Holding you close to His heart, ***“I bought you twice!”*** He says, ***“I’ll never let you go!”*** Jesus will only send you where His grace will always keep you. ***“Sanctify them by the Truth; Your Word is Truth!”*** Amen.