

Heavy Responsibility

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[0:00] Now, we spent all of last week's lesson talking about the unity of believers.

! And today we're going to back that talk up with some appropriate scriptures.! In John 17 verse 20, we read these words.

! These are from the Lord's Prayer. The Lord Jesus, talking to the Father, of course, I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word.

Now, for us, that's a vitally important passage. The Lord spoke that 2,000 years ago. He's talking about men in this room right now.

And men and women in other churches. And he's asking for those who believe through their word, their being the apostles, the disciples.

[1:14] This verse represents the true root of unity for all believers. And bear in mind, and I think I said this last week, this is a spiritual unity and not a denominational unity.

In the high priestly prayer, the Lord mentions three requests that He does not want the Father to fulfill.

That's an interesting twist. The Lord says, now, Father, don't fulfill these. First, He made it clear that in this prayer, He was not praying for the unbelieving world.

He made that very clear. He later said that He was not asking that the disciples be removed from this world.

He didn't want them to be taken out, but that they would be equipped to deal with life as it is in this world.

[2:22] You know, the easiest thing, wouldn't you think that you get saved and God takes you right to heaven? Well, that'd be fun, wouldn't it? You'd just go right to be with the Lord.

But the Lord doesn't do that. Why not? Well, because He's still redeeming a people for His namesake, and He uses the church to accomplish that.

That's why we're still here. And when He's through redeeming, we're gone. We're gone. Maybe that hour. I don't know. So He asks those two things for the Father not to do, and now He informs the Father that He's not just praying for the disciples that were there listening to this prayer, but there is another group that is related to them spiritually, but distinct from them.

The Lord looked forward through the centuries and prayed for all believers in the future. Every believer in the future.

He prayed for the church fathers in the first and second century, but He prayed down through time for Augustine and for Polycarp, and He prayed for Luther and Calvin and Zwingli, and He prayed for Whitefield.

[3:52] He prayed for Spurgeon, and He prayed down to our day. He prayed for the people in this church that are believers in this prayer. Millions would one day believe, yet they had not even been born.

And He's praying for them. These very people were on the heart of the Lord from eternity past. The Lord Jesus, Savior of His people, knew then and He knows now all who will be in Him by faith. He was so confident in His knowledge, and He has what? Perfect knowledge. Godly knowledge. He was so confident that He wrote their names down in the book of life before the foundation of the universe was even laid.

And He wrote it in ink. Or He wrote it with His finger in stone. So in this prayer, the Lord Jesus Christ intercedes for His children.

That is such an important theme. And you know, I don't know if we've plumbed the depths of what that means for us. He started that intercession 2,000 years ago, and He continues it to this very day.

[5:18] He always lives to make intercession for us. Hebrews 7.25 I love to have fun with my Wesleyan friends, and I'll say, Does Jesus ever pray a prayer that the Father says, No, I'm not going to answer that one.

Well, of course, that's an absurd question, isn't it? Obviously, the Father answers you. And every prayer Jesus ever prayed, the Father granted His request.

Well, He's making intercession for every true believer. How are they going to be lost someday? If Jesus is interceding for us?

The answer to that is we're not. Maybe disciplined. Have you ever been in the woodshed? Boy, I have. Jesus was very specific in His prayer to identify those of whom He was speaking. He said it was the people who would believe in Him. That word believe, by the way, in that language, pistou, was a strong word.

[6:32] Stronger than English. Commit, trust, give their lives to. It goes far beyond, well, I believe those chairs are going to hold you guys up.

This was a life commitment. Salvation has always been by grace through faith. There are some like to teach, well, the Old Testament you got saved one way and the New Testament.

No, no, no, no, no. Always grace through faith. Adam and Eve, Abel, grace through faith. There's only one way to be saved. It has never been by works of righteousness, which we suppose we have done, if we've ever done any works.

Works follow salvation. There can even be evidence that we have been truly saved because God has set forth works for us to do. But if it were by works, just think of all the boasting some people would do.

Just think of that. Well, yeah, you got saved because you did this, but let me tell you what I did.

You're not going to believe this. And then someone chimes in, well, that's nothing. You're not going to believe what I did.

[7:48] I had a friend of mine, several of you in here would know him. I'm not going to call his name. And he said, well, I think it's grace, but we also meet the Lord to a certain extent.

And I said, well, let me ask you something. When you get to heaven, how much credit are you going to give Jesus for your salvation? He said, well, all of it. I said, why? You just told me you had a part in it.

Well, I only had a few percentage points. So Jesus is going to get 97% credit. What He did on the cross was worth 97%.

Well, it doesn't sound right when you say it that way. Oh, the boasting. To eliminate all boasting, the Lord made it abundantly clear that salvation is a gift of God given to those whom the Father has drawn to the cross for that purpose.

For by grace are you saved through faith, that not of yourselves. It is a gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. But then, of course, we are His workmen.

[9:00] We do things for Him out of love, out of obedience, but we do those as evidence of a saved life, not to get a saved life.

There is an exquisite biblical balance in true salvation. On the one hand, only those given to Jesus by the Father and drawn to Him by the Spirit can be saved.

In spite of this, no one can be saved without personal faith in the Lord and His accomplishments at the cross.

We put our faith in that. The Bible makes it clear that the Lord will draw those whom He has chosen to Himself, yet the mandate of Scripture is clear when it comes to the church.

The church is to evangelize the lost, and when we do it properly, some are saved. Some are saved.

[10:03] The church, and yet the mandate continues. We are to evangelize the lost. The fact that the Lord uses the foolishness of man's preaching and teaching and witnessing to call the elect to Himself is an amazing, astonishing fact.

The church needs to see this as the highest of all privileges. One of the great books I ever read, and I certainly encourage it, and Mike, it's pretty short, is J.I. Packer's Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God.

It's a great book. And Dr. Packer asked a question that's very appropriate. He said, if God is sovereign, He knows who's going to be saved, He's already written their names down, then why do we witness?

Why do we evangelize? And there are several answers to that question. The first answer is because God tells us to. And let me tell you guys, we don't need any other reason than that, do we? Just the fact that God tells us to is enough. But there's another answer. I don't know how it works. But somehow, God weaves together our prayers to accomplish His purpose.

[11:26] I don't know how He does that. because He's sovereign and He already knows. But somehow, our prayers in some way play a part.

We can't comprehend that. We cannot possibly comprehend that. But He privileges the church of being the means of South Asian.

And Charles Spurgeon said that if God had decided to paint a yellow stripe down the back of every one of the elect, His ministry in London would be going around lifting shirts.

God didn't do that. So what did Spurgeon do? He preached to every creature that would listen to Him. And then when one of them got saved, He said, man, that was one of God's elect.

He got saved. He'd go to the next person. I had a friend of mine one time, I was talking about a guy I witnessed to in China. I probably have told you before, but I recycle my better stories.

[12:27] And I witnessed a young man in China and he came to the Lord. But this friend of mine that was a hyper-Calvinist, he says, well, I can't believe you did that. I said, why not?

And he said, well, how did you know he was one of the elect? I said, hey, I let God sort all that out. But I said, I'm reminded of the Scottish professor from years ago when he had a hyper-Calvinist that said, well, I'll never witness it.

What if they're not the elect of God? He said, son, if you lead someone that's non-elect, God will forgive you. If you lead someone to Christ that's not one of the elect, God will forgive you for that.

Trust me. In his high priestly prayer, the Lord makes reference to future souls being saved through the words written down by his present disciples, present in the room listening to this prayer.

The apostles and those associated with them were the human authors of the New Testament. They were the human authors.

[13:36] Ultimately, the Spirit of God wrote the Old and New Testament. We know that. He breathed the Word. Yet he did so through the agency of men.

And he did not compromise their knowledge or their skills, even their literary skills. But the Holy Spirit breathed every written word on the page.

Actually, hearing the preaching of the disciples and the apostles would save some. Paul said, I've come that some might be saved. But the vast majority of people in the church age have been saved through what they wrote down.

The written word. We studied part of that yesterday. Philippians. We're in here tonight in John. The written word. I'm going through a private Bible study at home in 1 John.

We study the written word, the words they wrote down, and millions have been saved through that. And through expository preaching and teaching on that written word.

[14:51] People saved today are coming through the written word commented on by preachers and teachers and evangelists. And the word of God makes this very clear. In Romans 10, 17, I'm told that the literal translation is faith comes by hearing and hearing by speeches about Christ.

We tell people about Jesus. And some get saved. Some get saved. The apostolic message is about Christ.

It's all Christ. It's all of Jesus. When we think back to the historical moment of the Lord's high priestly prayer, and if we go back day by day on a calendar, we'd come to that day.

It'd take us a while. It would not appear to rational men that the disciples in that room would turn the world upside down.

I mean, who were these guys? A bunch of fishermen. Uneducated. And they're going to turn the world upside down. One was a traitor.

[16:02] All of them saw with themselves the capacity to be the traitor. When Jesus said, when he betrayed me, every one of them said, is it I, Lord? The bravest of the brave among the disciples, Peter, would cower in fear and deny that he even knew the Lord.

And that's only going to happen a few hours after this prayer. Because the cross is looming. It's there. And all of them would abandon him at his arrest and flee into hiding.

The only people that didn't flee were the women. I love to teach about why where were women the first ones to the tomb and not men.

And there's a deep theological reason for that. Because the women weren't cowards. And the men were. They were in hiding. Women said, now we're going.

And they went. They went. Yet Christ prays ensuring that the ministry of the disciples would be greatly successful.

[17:17] He goes to the Father and intercedes for them. He's entered into his heavenly work in John 17. Because he's been interceding ever since this prayer.

this was his heavenly mission and he started it on earth in John 17. Being omniscient, the Lord Jesus knew of the success to come in the spread of the gospel.

And the gospel is still spreading. The role of his first follower would be fulfilled in redemptive history. People are still being saved through the writings of Paul, John.

I heard it said one time, I don't believe it. You got an unbeliever? Get him in the gospel of John by the time to read a chapter of night and by the seventh chapter he's going to get saved. It's just an amazing book.

And the Lord knew all this was going to happen after they were energized by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God who would come upon them.

[18:26] You read about that in Acts. with that power the disciples would start a chain of New Testament witnesses that would continue down to our day.

And there were some periods in history where that chain only had a few lengths but it never broke. It never broke. we are linked through the ages back to Peter and John and Paul and others.

It would be a great study if we could pull it off to take I'll use Mike as an example and get his testimony how did you get saved and who was instrumental in that okay let's go to that how did you get and you go back and I'm going to tell you something eventually you're going to come to these guys eventually you're going to come to Peter and Paul and John and the others and I told Dr. Brent Bry once and probably not that many people between you and Paul for instance a few thousand but in the grand scheme of things that's not very many. we are linked to Peter and to John and to Paul now the world was going to hate the disciples the world hates all believers after them Jesus told us that right the world's going to hate you it hates me why would it hate you?

are we above our master? should we expect better treatment than they gave Jesus? what'd they do to him? crucified him but the world and Satan would not overcome them that's key even if they killed them they wouldn't overcome them in fact in many respects they got even stronger I always remember the example of when they Paul when he was Saul dispersed the church in Jerusalem killed Stephen people fled into the night what happened?

[20:41] churches sprang up all over the known Roman world wherever they got to same thing happened in China about 10 years ago they had a church running 500 the authorities come in and said you can't have a church this size the biggest church you can have in China is five people next Sunday they had a hundred new churches with a total of 500 members that's how churches grow and that's how this happened and that chain is unbroken to this day to this very day the church's success in evangelism is the direct result of the Lord's request to the Father in John 17 20 this request was the foundation for the building of the church and its success from apostolic times to the present concerning this Jesus himself said this in Matthew 16 18 I will build my church and the gates of hell will not overpower

I was talking to a good Arminian friend of mine who believed you could lose your salvation for spitting on the sidewalk he said can you give me one verse that says you can't lose your salvation and it just popped in there I said yeah I will build my church and the gates of hell will not overpower the church is people it's not brick and mortar this building is going to disappear someday I remember when Second Baptist Houston had a 34 million dollar expansion and the first week with the ribbon they had Bailey Smith down there many of y'all know Bailey's name and Bailey said why do y'all build these things the antichrist is going to get this someday anyway you know take that money and send missionaries out the gates of hell will not prevail or overpower the true church in asking the father to establish and ensure the unity of believers in every age the son makes a very specific request in John the first part of verse 21 that they may be one that they may be one now there are hundreds thousands of denominations among true

Christians but all true Christians are united by regeneration united by the blood of Christ if they're legitimate all true Christians believe in the fundamentals of the faith grounded in the truth that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone as revealed in scripture alone to the glory of God alone does that sound familiar that's the five solos of the reformation right there and I

held up ten fingers five for this side five for this he alone is sufficient for and in all things for and in all things those who believe unto salvation make up his body spoken of in scripture but we live in an age of compromise

I got a little taste of this we've been seeing some great videos in here on Sunday morning and I watched another one I'd seen it in here and then I saw it again today and I'm not picking on Joel Osteen but let me pick on Joel Osteen a little bit they had him Larry King asked him said well are you saying that only people who believe in Jesus can be saved and Joel's answer was and I can't do it like Steve Lawson did but I don't know I don't I just don't know an answer to that I know I've lived in India with my dad and they love God over there and like Dr. Lawson said they hate God the real God they got 80 million gods but guys don't compromise on that we're talking about the creator God of the universe Jesus Christ those who believe unto salvation make up his body spoken of in scripture but we live in this age called the age of tolerance the age of compromise and the gospel message has been compromised greatly about 30-40 years ago we saw this starting or I did at least I was a new believer it was being reduced downward to its lowest possible denominator so it would be appealing to the most people at a one particular time like a one meeting or a one crusade give them the easiest way to quote get saved and they came up with all these man made inventions and it was reduced downward if Paul was with us today and he heard modern evangelism modern witnessing I fear that he would say you better go back and re-read the first chapter of Galatians because with a this present low view of the gospel he would say that's no gospel at all and it's not the true gospel that Paul was given by Christ directly and preached to Jews and Gentiles alike if it's not that gospel that Paul preached it is a gospel of hell and people who follow it will end up there [26:48] Paul was very clear on that let them be anathema the eternally damned the eternally condemned now when did this unity of believers start well the day of Pentecost is an important date it was on that day that believers were united sovereignly and supernaturally by the spirit joining the body of Christ and that was really a true baptism of the Holy Spirit and there's no evidence that anybody was slain or you know any of that and it was unique to that time since then those who have been truly saved received the spirit at the moment they believe and were supernaturally placed in the body of Christ we are members of his body Christ is the head we're the members some of your thumbs some of your hands some arms some legs because of this there is extraordinary unity among people of true faith

I've said often I have a lot more in common with a believing Roman Catholic than do an unbelieving Baptist may not find a lot in the Roman church but there's some there I have seen this played out many times in the persecuted countries Richard Wurmbrand the founder of VOM saw it many times from his prison cell where he was in there with guys from different denominations but they were united by the blood of Christ Tom White saw it in prison in Cuba Alan Ewan and Watchman Nee saw it in prisons in China and I met Alan Ewan Watchman Nee was already dead thousands of persecuted believers have seen it and you and I are going to learn about them in glory we're going to be with them in glory Paul lists seven features of spirit created unity there is one unified body of Christ comprised of all believers since the church began at

Pentecost there is one spirit that baptizes all believers into the faith there is one hope and the Holy Spirit guarantees that one hope hope is settled there is only one Lord who is the head of the body and his name is Jesus Christ there is one faith that has been handed down through the New Testament there is one baptism there is one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all this one true God is the sovereign ruler of the universe and all that is in it including the church and the Lord next gives a very detailed description of this unity by comparing the relationship not between the father and the church or the son and the church he uses compares the relationship from father to son verse 21 the second part of that verse 23 the first part even as you father are in me and I in you that they also may be in us the glory which you have given me I have given to them that they may be one just as we are one

I in them and you in me that they may be perfected in unity the unity the Lord Jesus prays for is to be patterned after the unity he enjoys with the father Jesus made it very clear during his earthly ministry that he was fully God he exercised the authority of God he forgave sin just as for instance he made an eye out of dirt and spit the most intricate organ in the universe he made it very clear who he was he has the same authority power purpose honor will and nature of the father and that's the claim that so outraged the Jews that they wanted to kill him and eventually they succeeded he was turned over to the Romans because he was a blasphemer in the

Jewish mind the Romans took him because he they said well he says he's a king there's only one king and that Caesar by a close reading of these words we see five features of the unity that we are to imitate as the church the father and son are united in the same motive of bringing glory to the Godhead the church must likewise be so united the father and son are united in the same mission of redeeming lost sinners the church has been called to share in that mission through global evangelism the father and son are united by the truth of scripture and the church must fiercely defend the truth that has been handed down to us read Jude he'll talk about that the father and son are united in their holiness and the church is to be united in its pursuit of holiness as well it will not be unto perfection in this life but it is to be our direction in this life and part of pursuing holiness is confessing sin when we miss the mark and we will miss the mark trust me the father and son are united in love we are to be united with each other and the godhead by the same love we are to love everybody but especially the household of faith especially so what is the result of this unity so that the world may believe that you sent me

[33:00] Jesus is talking to the father when they see this unity spiritual unity they are going to say the father the father sent Jesus to be the savior so that the world also may know that you sent me and loved them even as you have loved me so we see here two primary reasons the church is to display observable unity need it's not unity in word only it's observable unity first it gives ample evidence to the unbelieving world that the father has truly sent the son to be the savior of the world that Jesus was sent by the father that is the plan of redemption in a nutshell he came to seek and save the lost the world sees the unity of the true church and is then without excuse in its rejection of Christ as the only and unique son of

God that's what the world is supposed to see not baptists fighting over the color of carpet as my dad was fond of saying it was not a baptist he said that's how God grows baptist churches you made a reference to church splitting over different asinine reasons Ed Saussi our former pastor kept a list because he was going to write a book one day church split over the size of a piece of ham they had a dinner after the service probably Thanksgiving dinner and the ladies were serving and going through the line and there was a little boy there was the pastor's son and behind him was the chairman of deacons and the little lady gave the pastor's son he was a little bitty shaver and then she served the chairman and the chairman said he got a bigger piece of ham than I did she laughed thought he was joking he said I'm serious yelled at her I'm serious and he reached over and she kind of slapped his hand and he pushed her and her husband walked up and knocked him out and the fight was on and the church split over that it split over the sides of a piece of ham the unity of the church also authenticates the love that the father has for believers and the love the father has for his son it is through love lived out by the church that the world comes to know

Christ and what happens when the world sees us unloving to each other wow that's that's dangerous what does the world believe when it does not see love demonstrated not only to them out there not only like we did Saturday night in here but when it sees love not demonstrated internally what does the world believe when it sees the church fussing and fighting over trivial matters the size of a piece of ham the world concludes the world gives the unbelieving world the right to draw a conclusion the world concludes from our sinful actions that we really don't love each other and therefore we cannot possibly love God or his son if we can't even love one another but there's something much worse guys infinitely worse the world sees us not loving each other and concludes well you know

I don't think Jesus is the unique son and savior of the world and I don't think God the father sent him for the purpose of redeeming mankind because he said his followers would love one another and I don't see that happening and therefore I think Jesus is a fraud can you can you imagine the indictment that Tom Holland was so unloving that people went to hell concluding that Jesus wasn't real and I've got to give an account for that the church brothers and I close with this has a heavy responsibility there's your title the heavy responsibility of the church to love God the father to love Christ and to love each other and to love a dying world that's our message this evening