

Jesus' Abiding Prayer for Protection – John 17:11b-19

CBC Ilderton

Andrew Hall
February 9, 2020

How do you protect your faith? This question has caused Christians to wrestle with how they engage the broader culture. For some groups, resisting the advances of technology have been how they protect themselves. They resist driving cars or women wearing pants. Others have cars but without any chrome. Others don't have electricity in their house, but having it in the barn is okay. Some wear head coverings while others dress formally.

Others protect themselves from the world by avoiding certain activities. Avoid activities on Sunday. No sports. No riding bikes. Don't do homework. Some activities need to be avoided always. No card games. Don't dance. Don't chew. Don't go with girls who do.

Christianity has always had an uneasy relationship with the culture because Christianity has often viewed the culture as something to avoid because it may cause contamination. In John 17, Jesus prays for protection for his disciples so that they would be in this world, but not of this world. He prays that they would remain here but still be distinct from the surrounding culture.

Living out this command has resulted in much division among Christians. How much should Christians be assimilated into the culture around them? How much assimilation is too much? John 17:11b-19 is Jesus' abiding prayer for our protection. He is about to leave and go back to his Father. Let's see how Jesus prays for us so that we would be protected, and let's join him in that prayer and pursuit as well.

Pray to be protected by joy (vv. 11-14)

“Holy Father,” Jesus prays, “keep them in your name, which you have given me.” From the outset, we hear Jesus praying for our protection. On the one hand, we know that we are protected by Christ because he won't let any of his chosen ones be snatched out of his hand. We know that he loved his own disciples right to the very end (13:1). And part of his love for us to keep us and protect us is to pray for us.

And the way we are protected is in the name of the Father. As Jesus prays, he isn't using God's name as some sort of magical incantation. When he prays that we be protected in his name, he is using the phrase in the same way a messenger would say, “Open these doors in the name of the King!” By evoking the name of the Father, he is appealing to the nature, power, and authority of his Father. God, the covenant-keeping God, is being called upon to remember all of his vows – to never leave nor forsake his people. And Jesus prays in the same way.

Up until now, Jesus' presence has been the source of protection for the disciples, as v. 12 makes plain. But he is about to go to the cross. He is facing imminent death. And he will be taken up into heaven. He won't be seen by them in a short while. So now he prays for them – and for us – to be kept.

Now the typical way that people think about being protected is by avoiding certain things. If they avoid watching TV or Netflix, if they have wifi tools to protect their home from unwanted content online, if they separate themselves from the culture, they will be

Jesus' Abiding Prayer for Protection – John 17:11b-19

CBC Ilderton

Andrew Hall
February 9, 2020

safe. And there is a certain amount of preventative measures we all should take for wisdom's sake. Without any direction, monitoring, and supervision, families have personal sized devices that can access anything online anywhere anytime. There is a need to set limits and to teach wisdom.

But if we think that we can be protected only by avoiding things, we are horribly mistaken. There is a system of thinking that John calls "the world." And this system is under the rulership of the evil one who hates God. Therefore, anyone who loves God will be hated by this system of thinking, and Jesus makes it clear that his disciples will experience this hatred in v. 14. So we can avoid all of the bad things in our culture and yet still be hated because we gather together on Sunday mornings. There is a day coming where tax-exemption statuses of churches will be revoked unless they support the new definitions of human rights that have been determined. We saw this a few years ago when the Federal Gov't denied funding to faith-based groups who would not support 'charter rights and values' that suddenly included pro-abortion health-care and the most broad definition of marriage in human history.

You can avoid the system of the world's thinking all you want, but the system of the world is opposed to anyone whose religion can't remain private and shelled up. Yet to follow Christ is to say, "You are King of my entire life!" Therefore, to follow Jesus is to trust, love, and obey him in every sphere of life. What do we need to be protected from the system that opposes him?

We need his joy. And in v. 13, Jesus prays that his joy would be fulfilled in us. The way that we are protected is by the joy of Jesus! What does this mean? Jesus has already spoken to his disciples about his joy being in them. In John 15:11, he told them that he had spoken all of his words to them for their joy. This is closely associated with the abundant life language in John 10:10. And when we start to examine these two passages as they relate to this prayer, we discover Jesus praying two things:

- 1) that we would know that his death on the cross is the glorious way to eternal life that frees us from sin and death; and
- 2) that we would know his word is a life-giving word that is intended to protect us from harm.

In other words, Jesus wants us to recapture the wonder of saving grace and the delight of obedience. And there is nothing more that the devil would want than to destroy that delight of grace and obedience.

The greatest threat to faith is not doubt, questions, trials, or difficulty. The greatest threat to your faith is boredom. To have you numb life by endlessly flicking your thumb on your phone will do more to deaden the wonder.

In a recent episode of *The Crown*, the Netflix mini-series tracing the life of Queen Elizabeth II, Prince Philip is portrayed as having lost his faith. As the family heads to

Jesus' Abiding Prayer for Protection – John 17:11b-19

CBC Ilderton

Andrew Hall
February 9, 2020

church, Philip says to Elizabeth, “Why do we do this week after week, like lemmings?” He sits and listens to the monotone message and is full of boredom.

But as soon as he is back at Buckingham Palace, he is enamoured with details of Apollo 11's preparations for the moon. He watches the broadcast with amazement, and sees how the astronauts are true heroes, men of wonder and amazement. He watches the launch, the lunar landing, and the videos with amazement.

So when the astronauts return, an invitation is given to them to join the royal family at Buckingham Palace. Philip seeks to have a few minutes alone with them to ask them the deep probing questions about humanity – do we have a destiny? He is searching for meaning to all the questions of life. But when he finally sits down with these three heroes, he discovers that they suffer from colds, that they are more enamoured with the palace than the wonders of space, and they are plain and boring. Philip can't bring himself to ask the meaningful questions, and instead returns to the local minister in search of answers to the deep questions he wants answered.

We all want to be amazed, to be dazzled, and we are in an endless search to escape the boredom of life. But Jesus says, “Look to the cross! See my words as life!” The way that Jesus protects us is not by mere avoidance, but by wonder, delight, and joy in him.

Is your joy full, or empty? Is obedience dreary, or is it delightful? Pray as Jesus does – that his joy in knowing the Father's Word and following the Father's way would be your delight. Keep praying, seeking, asking. The regular means of grace – reading in his Word – is intended to fuel your heart with wonder, amazement, and delight. So Jesus can pray that we not be removed from this world, but that the evil one would not gain an advantage over us and that our joy in him would be greater than the joy of sin.

Pray to be sanctified for mission

The second way Jesus prays for us to be protected is to be sanctified. Since we are not going to be removed from this world but remain in it, Jesus prays that we would be sanctified, just as he has been consecrated (vv. 17, 19). How can we be in this world but not be of this world? How can we live among the system yet not be absorbed by the system?

Jesus prays that we would be sanctified by truth. What does it mean to be sanctified? There are several ways that we could define this word. First, to sanctify is to set apart. For many people, being set apart means living in a way that is so distinct from the culture that it is noticeable. So some groups go to great lengths to separate themselves from the surrounding culture. The culture is evil, therefore they must live in communes to protect themselves.

Second, to sanctify is to be devoted to a cause. This meaning of sanctify is probably a better way to understand what it means to be set apart. In the service of the Lord, there

Jesus' Abiding Prayer for Protection – John 17:11b-19

CBC Ilderton

Andrew Hall
February 9, 2020

were special utensils and tools to be used for the Lord. They were devoted to one purpose. They were intended to be used for the Lord, not for everyday use.

In days gone by, when people had others over for a meal on a special occasion, they would bring out the fine china. The china wasn't for every day use but for special occasions. It wasn't stored in the cupboard with the every day dishes, but in the china cabinet. In a similar way, to be sanctified is to be set apart, devoted for a particular purpose.

So when Jesus prays for us to be sanctified, notice how we are sanctified and what we are sanctified to. First, we are sanctified by the Word. As we hear the teachings of the Bible, our thinking is aligned with God's desires. We are mindful of what God desires. We want to obey him, love him, and live for him. His choices become our choices. His ways become our ways. And we are devoted to him.

This means that we need to have a regular plan of ingesting this Book – the Bible. Do you have a plan as to how you can make this Book a part of your daily schedule? Is it reading a paragraph or two after supper? Getting up a few minutes early in the morning to read a chapter? Listening to an audio version as you drive to work? Memorizing a few verses as you shave? Joining a life group, the men's or women's groups? Whatever it is – this Book will change you and shape you and conform you so that you are not conformed to the system of this world, but transformed by the renewing of your mind (see Rom. 12:1-2).

We are sanctified by the Word so that we align with God's truth. That's what we are sanctified by. But what are we sanctified for? Just like fine china, we have been set apart for a special purpose. And Jesus prays for us in v. 18 that we would be set apart for mission. Just as the Father sent the Son to the world on mission, so the Son sets us apart for mission in this world. The purpose of Bible study, of gathering on Sunday morning, of memorizing Scripture is not to end with us, but it is to set us apart and prepare us for mission. The Word is to prepare us to go and speak of Christ wherever we are – in our homes, as we put our children or grandchildren to bed, as we walk along the road, as we interact with our neighbours, as we spend hours at work – that we might speak of Christ.

Maybe you feel like you're not really all that prepared to go. Maybe you feel like you've got so much to learn. Maybe you feel nervous about talking with Christ. You're grateful for his protection, but you're not sure that he'll protect you when you open your mouth.

Friends, Jesus tells us in v. 19 that he has consecrated himself for this purpose – to set you apart by his word for mission. He is dedicated to keep you. He is fully committed to your joy that he would give himself wholly for your eternal joy. This is how much he loves you – with so many evils, so many battles, he is committed to you by going to the cross and giving up his own life for you to protect you. He's given you his Word to know the heart of the Father so that you might enjoy this Word, obey it, and go with it and tell others that there is joy for them in Jesus. Won't you go? Won't you tell others? You've been set apart, devoted to this task by the Son. The message is good news: Jesus saves!

Jesus' Abiding Prayer for Protection – John 17:11b-19
CBC Ilderton

Andrew Hall
February 9, 2020