

The High Priestly Prayer

Part 3
John 17:6-8

With Study Questions

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I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. ⁷ Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. ⁸ For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me (John 17:6-8).

Introduction

There is something about a courtroom that I find fascinating; and apparently it is not only me. Books, movies, plays and television shows will bring us into the halls of justice for entertainment: *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Verdict*, *Judgment at Nuremburg*, *A Time to Kill*, *A Few Good Men* and, of course, *Perry Mason* to name a few.

I recall, while in college, sitting in a courtroom waiting to contest a ticket I had received, listening to the judge adjudicate other citations and being enthralled by the mere authority of the event. I have had to appear in court for various reasons over the years (sometimes as a witness or as a support to a troubled friend) and it has always yielded the same effect. The room is usually made of some rich grade of lumber while the judge, donning a robe, sits elevated. The bailiff's eyes survey the room, ready to snuff out any disrespect; no gum chewing, hats, reading of newspapers.

Some arguments by defendants or their lawyers make sense, some don't. One aspect of this legal process that strikes me as distinct from other venues in life is the finality of the verdict and how the sentencing is without question and provides the conclusion. Another word spoken by the defendant after the sentencing would be grounds for contempt. You better have a good lawyer and a winnable case.

One particular ridiculous argument I heard made me think of how absurd any sinful human might sound seeking to defend himself before the holy Tribunal of God. The man had missed or ignored a traffic signal. He

stood before the judge and pleaded for an acquittal based upon the filth of his windshield. He missed the signal because he couldn't see it, because his windshield was dirty. The judge rolled his eyes, pounded the gavel and pronounced the sentence. The man was responsible for both the violation and the dirty windshield (which is its own violation).

It struck me how similar this might be to our defense before God. "Yes Lord, I am guilty of sin. But my excuse is that I am a sinner. And being a sinner clouded my judgment. I couldn't see properly because of the dead bugs on my sinful heart." To this the judge might respond, "But it is your sinful heart and not somebody else's. Do you think it is not a sin to be a sinner? To have a heart that is in active rebellion against all that is good and right and true? If someone is a natural born liar, thief or killer, does that excuse the murders they commit? It seems that your defense is merely making you guiltier." About here we start looking for a lawyer. How true the words of Job.

But how can a man be righteous before God? If one wished to contend with Him, He could not answer Him one time out of a thousand (Job 9:2, 3).

The Apostle Paul utilizes the setting of a courtroom to instruct us on an acquittal can be obtained before God. Paul rhetorically asks,

Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? *It is God who justifies.* ³⁴ *Who is he who condemns (Romans 8:33, 34)?*

The words have a "who dares" feeling to them. As if the true charge ought to be brought against the person with the audacity to seek to condemn God's elect. For the remainder of this chapter of Romans Paul will herald the indivisible nature of God's love for His children. But before that He will provide the foundation for that assurance Christians can have which make them "**more than conquerors**" (Romans 8:37) even in the face of death. The foundation revealed in the words:

It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us (Romans 8:34).

Jesus died for our offense and was raised because of our justification. As our living Savior and High Priest He makes intercession for us. In short, He prays for us. What we are currently studying is the supreme example of how Jesus prays for us – since this High Priestly Prayer is prayed in such a way as if the work were finished (John 17:4).

Review

Jesus begins with a prayer for Himself. As He approached the cross (the hour) He prayed the Father would glorify Him that He might in turn glorify His Father that He might give eternal life to those the Father had given Him. Jesus appeals to His own finished work in glorifying the His Father on earth then prays that He (Jesus) might receive the glory that He had with His Father before the world was.

This prayer for self is not only proper for the Triune God is worthy of all praise, glory and adoration, but it provides the framework for Jesus' pray for those whom He would save. When the sinner stands before the tribunal of God, realizing His best argument – even his best thousand answers – merely make him guiltier and turns and looks for an advocate, he doesn't want to see Johnny Cochran or Clarence Darrow. There is only one advocate who can provide that service as a legal officer of the court. Man's only hope on that day of reckoning is to turn and see Jesus.

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world (1 John 2:1, 2).

What will Jesus say? How will He defend us? What is the content of His intercession and how do we know we're included in it?

I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word (John 17:6).

Cleaning Our Windshields

The manifestation, *ephanerosa* meaning to make visible or conspicuous, of the name of God means that Jesus opens the eyes of sinful men to the “**only true God**” (John 17:3). Our blind eyes are given sight by the grace of God in Christ. Our windshields were wiped clean enough to see our trespasses and need for grace. Jesus goes on to speak of God’s eternal decree by revealing to His followers that they belonged to God and were given to Christ.

Given to Christ

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out (John 6:37).

The Christian’s inclusion in the Kingdom of God was no afterthought or mere response by God to the pleas or even faith of man. It is by God’s holy and eternal design. On this, John Calvin explains,

God therefore distinguishes them from the reprobate, not by faith, or by any merit, but by pure grace; for, while they are alienated from him to the utmost, still he reckons them as his own in his secret purpose. The certainty of that election by free grace lies in this, that he commits to the guardianship of his son all whom he has elected, that they may not perish; and this is the point to which we should turn our eyes, that we may be fully certain that we belong to the rank of the children of God; for the predestination of God is in itself hidden, but it is manifested to us in Christ alone.¹

Imagine standing guilty in the courtroom only to hear this dialogue! To come to realize that Jesus is no mere court appointed attorney and the judge is a judge but also much more – that He made you and owns you. And that from eternity past He determined to entrust you into the hands of this Advocate who is also His only begotten Son; who, by His faithful

¹Calvin, J. (1998). *Calvin's Commentaries: John* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; Calvin's Commentaries (Jn 17:6). Albany, OR: Ages Software.

sacrifice would deliver you from a judgment that was just and certain. But it is with the same certainty that Jesus proclaimed all the Father gives Him “**will come**” to Him.

The Evidence of Inclusion – God’s Word

And what is the evidence of your inclusion in this intercession? Jesus explains “**they have kept your word.**” What does it mean to keep the word of God? To keep *teterekan* means to guard, keep an eye on, the noun form would be used to describe a warden. It also means to obey or observe. It doesn’t mean that a Christian’s obedience is without sin. It does mean that the Christian knows his Master and seeks to obey. Of course God’s word includes more than the commands to be obeyed, it includes the gospel that is to be believed.

Jesus elaborates in verse seven:

Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You (John 17:7).

This prayer of Jesus includes numerous things the Father has given the Son: work, a people and glory to name a few. But verse eight highlights something the Father gave to the Son.

For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me (John 17:8).

Word and Word

Jesus gives to His true disciples the words which the Father had given Him. It’s worth noting the distinction between “the words” in this verse and the “word” in verse six. In this verse is the word for words is *rhemata* which means words. In verse six the word for word is *logos* which means all sorts of things.

Logos can refer to reason as in Acts 18:14 where Gallio is looking for a reason to bear with the Jews. *Logos* can also refer to full expression of something God says or does. When the centurion appealed to Jesus for the

healing of his servant, he said he wasn't worthy for Jesus to enter his house. He goes on to say:

Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You. But say the word, and my servant will be healed (Luke 7:7).²

John also uses the word *logos* for Christ:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (John 1:1; cf. 14; 1 John 1:1).

It would appear that in the same way the name of God is used to describe the totality of who God is, the word of God is to be identified with God Himself. For this reason we should not be surprised to see such depth and emphasis attached to it.

Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word (*logos*) he shall never see death (John 8:51).

So how do these two words interact? It is through the words *rhema* that we come to know the word *logos*. As a church we ask only three questions of prospective members. These are vows they make as a public profession of faith in Christ. The first question asked is a question to which any Christian would answer in the affirmative.

Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?

It appears that Jesus is teaching that the word of God takes root in true believers. The Apostle Paul put it this way:

For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in

²The New King James Version. 1982 (Lk 7:7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

truth, the word (logos) of God, which also effectively works in you who believe (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Receiving the Word – Receiving Christ

The receiving of the words of Christ are the receiving of the words of God. And it is in these words that men come to know the word itself – that the Father sent the Son. This is but one portion of this High Priestly Prayer. That though we are as guilty as sin and worthy of condemnation before the pure and undefiled gaze of God’s holy eyes in the courtroom of supreme justice, we discover that the Judge owns us and loves and sent His own Son to be our advocate – our Advocate who will plead for us, not according to our righteousness, but according to His own.

Questions for Study

1. Discuss how a man might seek to defend himself before God (pages 2, 3)?
2. How does the Apostle Paul utilize a courtroom to explain how a man is acquitted before God (pages 3, 4)?
3. Review the first five verse of the High Priestly Prayer (page 4).
4. How does Jesus clear our windshields (page 5)?
5. In what respect should a Christian view themselves as a gift from the Father to the Son (pages 5, 6)?
6. What evidences a person's inclusion in Christ's kingdom (page 6)?
7. Discuss the distinctions between the two words for *word* (page 6, 7).
8. What does it mean to receive the word (page 8)?