

Session 1: John 17

by Joseph Carroll

Joseph Carroll's sermon on John 17 emphasizes the importance of prayer, sanctification, and unity among believers as essential for witnessing to the world.

Duration: 41:44

Scripture: John 10:27

Topics: "Christian Life", "The Power of Prayer", "Unity in the Church"

Description

Joseph Carroll emphasizes the significance of Jesus' prayer in John 17, highlighting the themes of protection from evil, the importance of unity among believers, and the call to be sanctified for the purpose of witnessing to the world. He illustrates how Jesus prayed for His disciples without complaint, teaching us to approach God with a spirit of praise rather than criticism. Carroll shares personal anecdotes to demonstrate the power of prayer and the necessity of maintaining unity within the church, as it reflects the glory of God and serves as a testimony to the world. Ultimately, he calls for believers to be set apart and dedicated to the mission of spreading the gospel, embodying the love and unity that Jesus prayed for.

Transcript

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. Verse 12.

While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name, those that thou gavest me I have kept. There you have it again. And none of them is lost, but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled.

And now come I to thee, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil.

Or that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one, or keep them from the devil. I pray this prayer daily for my own, because I am the high priest of my own household, and I name each member of the household by name before the throne of God, and ask that he will keep us from the devil. And it's from this verse through to verse 23 that I want to emphasize this evening.

But I want you to note thus far in this prayer, that there is not one word of complaint concerning the disciples. Not one word. He has nothing but praise for them.

You would think, if you were listening to his prayer, that they must all be perfect. We have something to learn here. Don't come to the Father in the behalf of others with a critical attitude toward them, because you will not have audience with the King.

I've mentioned before that great man of God praying high. On one occasion in India when I was ministering to missionaries at a series of conferences in South India, I met a missionary from Sialkot. Sialkot was in a part of India which they call sterile.

You can pass from one area in India to another area, and you seem to cross an invisible line. On this side of the line, the Holy Spirit is working. On that side, it is sterile.

Missionaries have been there 20, 30 years. Not one convert. Not one.

It's a sterile area. Non-productive. Praying high labored for a year.

He had a gospel tent and went from village to village, and his tent didn't win one soul. Whole year. So he decided to take time out for prayer.

Not just a day or two, he decided to take 30 odd days to pray. So he went up to a little hilltop bungalow, and with his 3 companions, 2 or 3 companions, they began to pray. 30 odd days.

Just a minimum of food, no contact with the outside world, just waiting upon God. And when they came down, they came to the Sialkot convention, and Sialkot was in a sterile area. And a tremendous revival broke out.

In the sterile area. And that missionary told me that even today, Sialkot is different from the surrounding towns and villages. He said, it's different.

You walk into Sialkot and you're conscious that this place is different, that God is here. 50 years later. We don't know much about that, do we? Praying hard on one occasion saw that a brother pastor was backslidden.

So he did the Christ-like thing, he decided to pray for him. He didn't share his convictions with anybody else. He decided to seek the Lord for him.

And so he went again to a hilltop, a little bungalow. And he began to pray, and he prayed something like this. Dear Father, you know brother so-and-so how, and he was going to say, cold he is.

And the Lord stopped him. So he said, well, try again. You know brother so-and-so how.

Couldn't get it out. The Lord stopped him. He was going to tell the Lord how cold he was.

And the Lord spoke to him. And he was a man that knew when God spoke. He said, if you touch him, you touch the apple of my eye.

It's a very serious thing to touch a Christian. Don't you know what a Christian is? A Christian is a son of God. It would be a very serious thing to me if you touched my son.

I might get angry. And what are you going to tell the Lord that he doesn't already know? And the Lord's reaction to the need of his child is compassion. Always compassion.

So he said, well Lord, how shall I pray? He said, you praise me for every good thing you see in that man. And so he began to praise him that he was a good husband, he was a good father. And it turned into a praise meeting.

When he came down from the hilltop, the man was revived and restored. What a lesson to learn. What a lesson to learn.

We are supposed not to be as the world. The world criticizes, censures, all the rest of it. We are supposed to love.

And love always sympathetically identifies with the one in need, who is loved. I trust we will remember the message we had some weeks ago on our Lord always responded to the need, not the condition. And the more we become like Jesus Christ, the more we will respond to the need, not the condition.

We have mentioned Miss Dieterle from this pulpit. Great woman of God. But she was in the city of Louisville many years ago and she was living with a dear sister who, and I've lived with a dear sister who is a somewhat awkward sister, but a dear sister.

Very dominant. And Miss Dieterle took it for about three days and decided to pray about it. She couldn't pray in the home, but she decided to, that night, to walk the streets of Louisville and pray about it.

So I don't know how long she was out there telling the Lord about the need, but probably she just was a little bit out of wind, and probably that's all her prayer was. And the Lord said to her, Gladys. She said, yes, Lord.

What are you doing? She said, I'm praying, Lord. Well, what do you want me to do? She says, I want you to straighten, and she mentioned the name of the sister, I want you to straighten her out, Lord, she just has to be straightened out. He said, Gladys, are you perfect? And she said, no, Lord, I'm not perfect.

He said, neither is your sister, she is being perfected. Go home and go to bed. And Miss Dieterle also knew the voice of the Lord when he prayed.

If we could learn that one lesson this year, it would be worthwhile. Just one. Our Lord, no word of complaint, you would think they were perfect.

In Him they are, in Him we are, thank God. On one occasion, Andrew Bonner was asked to pose for a photograph. He said, if you wait a little longer, you'll get a better one.

Get a better one. I'm glad the Lord prayed this prayer for his own and for us. Because it will be answered.

I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the devil. Now I know a lot of people say, don't advertise the devil, and this is true. We should not advertise the devil.

But if you study that last night, or this night, when our Lord is praying, you'll find that again and again He's referring to the devil. In the same night. In chapter 12, 31, 13, 27, 14, 30, 16, 11, He refers to the devil.

That he would be cast out, that he had entered into Judas, that he was on his way, that he had been judged. And so he prays for his own. Because back of every sinister influence is Satan himself.

You are dealing with the devil. You're dealing with the devil. It is his power over those who are his followers that we must deal with.

And so he prays that they will be kept from the evil ones. He's praying for their protection. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

Now, what are they to be protected from? I believe primarily from the world. You see that thou should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

And we should know what the world is by now. And we do know that when the enemy wants to rob a church of all that it should be, he simply infiltrates with the world. So you have a form and no substance.

You have a message and no power. Because the world has entered. Worldly methods, worldly attitudes.

What does it mean to be kept from the devil? Well, it means many things, but I think here primarily it means being kept from the world. And it means that these individual disciples may not be snared by Satan into entering the domain of the world. They are crucified unto the world.

You don't belong to the world, my friend. You belong to Jesus Christ. Billy Bray, the great Cornishman.

He's a very illiterate man, but a tremendous preacher of the gospel. Unique in his presentation. And there was some youth who wanted to take a ride out of Billy.

And so they hid up in a tree where they knew he would pass by. And when he passed by, they said, This is the devil, Billy. Or rather, the devil's dead, Billy.

The devil's dead. And he said, Well, you're a poor, fatherless child. And on another occasion, a person said to him, How's the world getting on, Billy? He said, I don't know.

I haven't been there for 30 years. I don't know. He said, I haven't been there for 30 years.

That was his power. He hadn't been there for 30 years. He'd been converted 30 years.

He was taken out of the world and he stayed out of it. I tell you, my dear friend, when Jesus Christ saves you, he saves you out of the world. You'd better keep out of it.

Because that's just where the devil will get you. Verse 17. Sanctify them through thy truth.

Thy word is truth. Or, make them holy in the truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one.

Now I want you to notice a very important truth here. And I want you to notice the progression of the truth. He's praying that they should be kept from the devil.

And from the world. Then he prays for their sanctification. And in the original here, the verb means to be set apart from the world by actual holiness of life.

Become holy. To become different. So that the person who is set apart, who is sanctified, in his heart and in his every thought and word and deed, there is one desire above all others, and that is to live in accordance with the will of his master for his life, which is revealed in his word.

Now is that your dominating passion? You want to know and you want to do the will of God for his sake. Set apart, sanctified, made holy by the truth. Sanctify them through thy truth.

Thy word is truth. Now I want you to note that the sanctified ones are sent into the world. What for? To witness.

As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world, and for their sakes I sanctify myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Now what does he mean by that? I've sent them into the world. But then he says, for their sakes I sanctify myself.

What does he mean? I dedicate myself to that for which I came into the world. I set myself apart for the fulfillment of that for which I came into the world. And what was that? Our redemption.

The cross. The laying down of his life. In order that he might do the will of his Father.

Now, I want you to notice the connection here. He says, for their sakes I sanctify myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth. What is the message for us here? The message is this.

As our Lord surrendered himself to the will of the Father, which meant the separating of himself unto the will of the Father, in order that the Father's will might be done through him. So we must be set apart in order that the will of Christ might be done through us. Why did Jesus come into the world? That he might proclaim the message that God gave him to proclaim.

And he tells us this in the early part of the prayer. He sets himself apart that we might set ourselves apart. He dedicates himself to the fulfillment of the task.

We dedicate ourselves to the fulfillment of the task. What is it? Going out into the world to give the word to the world. Verse 13.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, which shall believe on me through their word. Whose word? Those that are sanctified. Those who have been set apart.

Those who have dedicated themselves to do the will of their Lord. They are the ones that speak. You cannot bypass sanctification and come to witness it.

What you are determines the power with which you would speak. So he speaks about sanctification being set apart. He sets himself apart that they also might be set apart for the fulfillment of his will for them.

Which is what? That they might go out into the world and be his witnesses. First by their lives and then by their lives. Verse 20.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, which shall believe on me through their word. Not through the word of the evangelist or not through the word of the pastor. That's a false concept.

That the pastor must do the preaching and the evangelist must do the soul saving. And the pastor, of course, he can do some soul saving also, but not me. That's his job.

It's your job. It's your task to be a witness. Sanctified, set apart, witness to Jesus Christ.

Wherever you are. I said last week, or the last time I preached, I'll say again. There is no such thing as a part-time worker.

We're all full time. There's no such thing as the secular and the sacred to the Christian. Whatsoever you do in word or deed, do it as unto the Lord.

That means everything. That means washing dishes. That means keeping books.

That means studying at school. You're doing it as unto the Lord. From the Lord you receive a reward.

He sends you into the world to be his witness. But then I want you to notice the progression here. His burden now is for oneness.

And he's speaking not about some local assembly. He's speaking about the church universal. All who will believe.

That's the church universal. That they all may be one as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee. That they also may be one in us.

That the world may believe that thou hast sent me. Now you're reaching the climax of his prayer. The setting apart of the disciples.

The witnessing to others that they might be saved. To what end? That they may be one. Why? That the world may believe.

That the world may believe. So if our Lord is praying for us that we might be one. That the world may believe.

You can be certain that the devil desires to divide. That the world may not believe. Let's face it.

Beware lest you do the work of the devil in the name of the Lord. I tell you, my friend, it's a very solemn thing to do anything that interferes with the unity of the church. Wherever that church is.

I have at times, I believe under the direction of the Spirit, sacrificed what I felt was the best thing for a person because I realized he would be better off with another group that didn't believe really as I believed. But I let him go with the group. Of course, for the sake of unity.

Why not? It's a very solemn thing to do anything that interferes with that unity. The Lord gave me this message three weeks ago and I can see why he gave it to me. I've never preached on it before.

That the world may believe. There must be a united opposition to the world. And this unity of all believers is not merely an outward unity.

It's a unity that resembles the unity that exists between the Father and the Son. It's a unity that is spiritual. Now I know there is a difference between the unity of the Father and the Son and the Spirit because it's a unity in essence.

It's a oneness in essence. But with the believers there is a oneness in mind and effort and purpose. There is a difference in the unity, it's true.

The Father and the Son is a union in essence. But this is a union in mind, a union in heart, a union in purpose. What purpose? The proclamation of that gospel.

That's the purpose. That they may be one. And then the next step, verse 22.

And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one even as we are one. You know what happens when you have unity in a local fellowship or assembly? You have the glory of God. You do? There should be the glory of God here.

And at times people have experienced that as they have come in. There's a young man that we've mentioned before, a hippie, who came into the meeting and immediately he said it's different. And the message that night was on the cross of Christ and he saw something of the glory of Christ.

And that's why he was saved. He wasn't saved by the message. He just felt something.

And then the message got to him, you see. Of course he had to hear the message, he had to believe, that's true. But had he not experienced that something, he'd been in churches, he'd been in many places.

That was one of the reasons he was a hippie. He just sensed the glory of God. He was saved.

He believed. If there is no setting apart, there is no spirit-empowered witness, there is no oneness, there is no glory. But if you destroy the oneness, you will destroy the manifestation of the glory.

That's pretty solid. Now in Ephesians chapter 4, where we have similar truth. This one, I therefore the prisoner of the Lord beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all loneliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.

Striving to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of faith. Loneliness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance. What beautiful words.

Nothing aggressive about this. Nothing I-know-what-you-need-do-it about this. Isn't it sad? Gentleness, a proper estimate of oneself, loneliness, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance.

If the brother doesn't agree with you, maybe the brother's right. That is possible. Maybe he's right.

It's possible. Whether you believe it or not, it's possible. He may be right.

You'd ask the Lord about it. But there's one thing we all have to do. We have to strive to keep peace in order there might be unity.

That we must do. And sometimes we have to oppose false teachings. A very sad thing happened recently, because of false teachings.

To a person who was saved under my own ministry, but who was very young in the faith, about one year old. He had a book. And I just happened to notice it on his table.

And I picked it up. And on the cover was something about the practice of the early church. Well, I've been through all this many times.

We had it in Japan. People came out and told us, what you need is the Acts of the Apostles all over again. And the people who preach most about it, about 20 of them missionaries.

I think only two are left on the field today. Whenever you get something they're teaching about the early church, you'll usually find this error. And I want you to underline it.

And it was in this book. And I showed it to him. And in order that you might realize this is just not my idea alone, I want a quote from Dr. Robertson McQuilken, the founder of Columbia Bible College.

He was a great Bible teacher, gifted man. It's in a little book, Joy and Victory. Moody Colteries.

And this heading is, Must Apostolic Experiences Be Ours? The book of Acts is an incomplete stage of revelation. Underline it. That's worth underlining.

The book of Acts is an incomplete stage of revelation. Why? Because it's church history. It's church history.

The history of the church is still being written tonight. Just as the four gospels are. It is the record of the establishing of the church of Christ.

And the establishing of its doctrine. The opening of the new dispensation of the Holy Spirit. It is not, as certain modern teachers teach, the record of how the early disciples gave shape to their warm love for Christ and their ideas of his gospel.

It goes without saying that in every line of the Acts there is teaching and inspiration for the Christian today. But it should also go without saying that the experiences of these early apostles in founding the church are not necessarily models for Christians today. Now underline that.

I'll read it again. It should also go without saying that the experiences of these early apostles in founding the church, the experiences now, are not necessarily models for Christians today any more than the command of the Lord to his apostles in the gospels to preach only to Israel, not to the Gentiles, is a command to be followed by missionaries today. If you're going to keep yourself in the Acts of the apostles, we'd better vacate this building.

No building like this in the Acts. You'd better stop going to Bible conferences. You'd better stop supporting missionary societies.

You don't have them in the Acts. Ludicrous, isn't it? But very dangerous. Very dangerous.

And we're going to get more of this. Because we're living in a desperate age. And people who are primarily driven by their emotions come to emotional conclusions.

I tell you, you need to be driven by the Holy Ghost. You need to be driven by the Holy Ghost. This is divisive.

Because you see, our dear Pentecostals say, this is it. I will accept any person who says, I am convinced that we can do this if it's on a biblical basis, but I will not accept it when he says, this is right and everybody else is wrong. That is not so.

We are not perfect. We are being perfect. And thank God down the centuries of the Church, His Church, you have had people widely differing, but both experiencing revival.

The Moravians, they had their bishops and all that goes with the bishops and so on. Episcopal type of government. Tremendous outpouring to the Church.

And yet you have the Wesleyans, side by side, and the Moravians had great movings of the Spirit in England. At the same time as the Wesleyans, which very few people know about. The Moravians would wait quietly in the stillness for the moving of the Spirit.

The Wesleyans took off with their hallelujahs and amen. God bless them both. Why did He bless them both? Because of their heart condition.

God looks past the silence, He looks past the hallelujahs, to your heart. Learn that. Man looks on the outward appearance, God looks on the heart.

Man responds to the outward appearance, God looks on the heart. When are we going to learn that? The outward appearance affects men, the heart affects God. We need to learn that.

Striving to keep the unity of the Spirit, the bond of peace. And then you have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Fatherable and so on. Verse 13.

Or verse 12. We read in verse 11, He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

Till we all come in the unity of the faith. Isn't that beautiful? Why does God give pastors, teachers, evangelists, apostles, prophets? Why does He give them? For the perfecting of the saints. For the sanctification of the saints.

That's why He's here. One of the younger members of my family asked me why I didn't preach the gospel here. Well, I'm usually being straightened out.

Sometimes by Christians, a year or two in Christ. Very often by my children. So I could tell them I'm perfecting the saints that they might witness.

That was good enough. I was off the hook. Perfecting the saints that they might tell the gospel.

And perfecting the saints that they might become one. That the glory of the Lord might be seen in themselves. Unity.

Jesus prayed for it. The climax of His prayer, that the glory might be given. Perfecting of the saints.

For the work of the ministry. For the edifying of the body of Christ. Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

What beautiful words. That we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the slight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to receive. But speaking the truth in love may grow up into Him in all things which is the head, even Christ.

From whom the whole body fitly joined together that they may be one as Thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee that they also may be one in us. There it is. Union with Jesus Christ.

From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth according to the effectual working in the measure of every part maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love which can alone maintain the unity. And as the unity is maintained by love the glory is manifested and the world believes. And those that come in are maintained in unity by love and the world sees and the world believes.

That's God's message. It should be asked. Shall we pray? Father, if there is need of confession of sin give us grace to confess.

Thy word is not given to inform us but to transform us. To change us. O Lord, give us a love for your church universal.

Not our own little place a land where we worship and is precious to us. But Lord, your church universal. The body of Christ in Greenville, wherever it is.

In the United States. In China tonight. In Russia.

Throughout the world. Your church for which you died. O Lord, give us a love for your word that we might be sanctified.

Set apart. Dedicated. To the proclamation of the glorious gospel of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

And Father, use our tongues to glorify your name not to divide your body. Teach us to praise you for everything we see in the one whom it would be easy to crucify. Give us grace, Father, to see the believers you see in Jesus Christ.

And if he has need, lovingly, tenderly, compassionately to restore him in a spirit of meekness. Not to judge, but to assist to restoration. O Lord, hear us in this and meet us in our need that the glory of the Lord might be upon us and the world may be needed.

This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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