

Standing Firm in a Culture of Compromise

In the World but not of it

Sunday May 6th 2018 @ Concord Church

There is no doubt that our culture is changing at a great speed. Christians today face a dilemma: in the world that seems to reject everything we believe. How do we walk closely with God without caving or yielding to pressure or without offending/upsetting those we want to reach?

We are living in the age & time when/where: (1) Evil is tolerated and considered even good. (2) Where absolute truth of God's Word is ridiculed and people call it pluralism (3) Where many God's are worshiped under the cover of multiculturalism (4) Where alternative lifestyle is adopted, thus enduring perversion (5) Where funds are embezzled and bribery in various forms and shapes is common (6) Where laziness is rewarded and unborn are killed. (7) Where children discipline is neglected and named as self-esteem (8) Where same-sex marriage and gender change is becoming a normal thing and even supported by the governments (9) Where air is polluted by profanity and pornography (10) Where coveting is called ambition (11) Where time honoured values of our forefathers have been degraded and ridiculed and (12) where the spiritual equilibrium is lost and Godly values are reversed.

Consequently, we feel like we don't know our place anymore. Many are frustrated and even confused, torn between what we hear in church and what we see online and on television. Many feel caught between extremes--not wanting to alienate people who need God just as much as we do, and not wanting to compromise our convictions and biblical beliefs. Many have questions with no easy answers, like:

1. What's my role as follower of Jesus in today's constantly shifting culture?
2. How can I stand firm in my faith and still be relevant to people who seem so different from me?
3. How does the Christian message apply to everyone when there are so many differences in culture, ethnicity, lifestyle, orientation, political beliefs and spiritual practices?
4. Is the entire Bible still relevant, or are some parts culturally outdated?
5. Does God love all? Didn't He sent His son to die so that all may be saved?
6. If I stand for truth, what will people think of me?
7. How can I help my kids engage in culture without losing them to it?
8. How do I handle the barrage of constant change in our world?

So, what is the balancing act?

Finding balance while living in this world, full of tension and pressure is my sermon all about. While, in the coming months, I will look at various issues and the life of people mentioned in the Bible, related to the situation Christians face today, we will focus on Jesus Christ as our model and guide. No matter how challenging and frustrating the situation may feel sometimes, there is a way to stand strong and face the dilemma. So, let's get started by meditating on a passage found in the Gospel of John 17: 15-21.

At the age of 33, night before going to cross in the garden of Gethsemane. He prayed about His disciples (you & me) and pointed out three things for each one of us, to seek and ask:

Lord, sanctify me Lord, solidify me & Lord, send me .

Jesus prayed for His disciples, and what He prayed was striking and full of meaning for believers of every generation.

[. Request 1: that God would keep them, and keep them together as one \(v.11-12\).](#)

[. Request 2: that they might have His joy in all its fulness \(v.13\).](#)

[Request 3: that God would keep them from the evil one or Satan \(v.14-16\).](#)

[Request 4: that God would sanctify them \(v.17-19\).](#)

There are four reasons why Jesus was praying only for His disciples. Note and remember that the reasons are part of His prayer.

1. Jesus' disciples had been given to Him *by His Father* ([John 17:9](#)). They belonged to His Father, but they had been *entrusted into His hands*. He was responsible for them and their welfare. Therefore, He had to pray for them, that His Father would give them special strength in the coming days.

2. Jesus' disciples belonged to both Him and the Father ([John 17:10](#)). Note exactly how Jesus worded this: "All mine are thine, and thine are mine." All the disciples were God's; they belonged to God. But all the disciples of God also belonged to Jesus. This is the mutual possession of all believers by both Jesus and God. They are both deeply concerned over the welfare of believers. God is as concerned over believers as Jesus is; therefore, Jesus can count on God hearing and answering His prayer.

"My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" ([John 10:29](#)).

3. Jesus' disciples glorified Jesus; their lives brought glory to Him ([John 17:10](#)). They lived for Him by obeying His Word and working

for Him and showing loyalty and allegiance. They lifted Him up to the world and proclaimed Him to be the Saviour of the world and the Lord of the universe. He was thereby glorified, honoured, and praised; therefore, He prayed for them—that they might become strong in their lives and witness for Him.

"That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ" ([2 Thes. 1:12](#)).

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" ([1 Peter 2:9](#)).

4. Jesus was leaving the world and returning to heaven and the Father ([John 17:11](#)). The whole mission of preaching the gospel to the world rested upon the shoulders of His disciples. They were the ones who were to go out into the world as His ambassadors to proclaim His Word. As they went, they needed to be strengthened and equipped by God to stand against some terrible forces. His followers were the ones who needed special prayer. His whole mission of reaching the world for God depended upon their endurance and faithfulness. In these last hours before He returned to heaven, He had to pray for them with power and intensity, asking great things of God.

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" ([Matthew 28:19-20](#)).

"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" ([John 20:21](#)).

Persecution— World, Against Believers: Jesus prayed that God would keep the disciples from the world and from the evil one or Satan. Both the world and Satan are evil and stand opposed to all that Jesus and His disciples proclaimed.

⇒ The world and Satan stand against the love of God.

⇒ The world and Satan stand against the holiness and justice of God. Why? Because it means that both must stand before God some day and give an account of their lives and deeds, sins and dirt, pollution and evil.

⇒ The world and Satan stand against Jesus. Why? Because Jesus was the One who claimed to be the Son of God, and if He is truly the Son of God, then total allegiance is due Him. And neither the world nor Satan are willing to serve anyone other than self.

There were three primary reasons why God needed to protect the disciples from the world and the devil.

1. The world and the devil hated the disciples of Jesus. Note why.

a. The disciples of Christ have the Word of God. It is God's Word that reveals...

- God's love, a sacrificial love that gives all it has, is different from the love the world wants.

- God's holiness and justice and man's depravity, a fact that man rejects and refuses to face.

- Christ, the Son of God Himself, who demands total allegiance and commitment to become ministers and servants of God.

b. The disciples were not of the world, even as Jesus was not of the world. The disciples and other believers were born again by the Spirit of God and given the very nature of God. The world and the devil want absolutely nothing to do with a selfless and sacrificial nature, a

righteous and godly nature that cares for the needs of the lost masses of the world.

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" ([John 13:34-35](#)).

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" ([Romans 5:8](#)).

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren [giving all we are and have]" ([1 John 3:16](#)).

2. The disciples were needed in the world. The need was not for them to be taken out of the world; the need was for them to be kept from the evil one or from Satan (cp. [Ephes. 6:10-18](#)). The disciples were called to be ambassadors and messengers of God in the world. God's mission to save the world depended upon their loyalty and faithfulness. They had to be kept and protected and covered with the armour of God.

3. The disciples were now of the same nature as Jesus. This is the same truth stated in [John 17:14](#). The truth is so glorious, it has to be reemphasized. Note that it is also the main reason the world and the devil attack the believer.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" ([Romans 12:1-2](#)).

Sanctification: Jesus prayed that God would sanctify the disciples. Note the two things said about the disciple or believer.

⇒ He is to be sanctified

⇒ He is to be sanctified through God's truth, and God's truth is said to be God's Word. God's Word would refer to both the *living Word*, the full revelation of God in Jesus Christ Himself and to the spoken or *written Word*.

The disciples needed to be set apart to God *through His truth* for two reasons.

1. They were being sent into the world just as Jesus had been sent into the world. Jesus had come into the world to bring men back to God through reconciliation. The disciples had to be *set apart* to this same task.

"Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you" ([John 20:21](#)).

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" ([Matthew 28:19-20](#)).

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" ([Mark 16:15](#)).

2. Sanctification is the way of salvation chosen to reach the world. Jesus had set Himself apart to please God, and He pleased God to the ultimate degree. No matter the cost, the glory of God was to be done. Perfect obedience to God was the chosen way of salvation. Being set apart to serve and worship God is what salvation is all about. This is the reason Jesus prayed for His disciples to be sanctified.

We are called to make a difference. In Matthew 5:14, Jesus said “You are the light of the world”. We the children of God needs to shine where others can see it. While God calls us to be His people-- set apart, He also calls us to go into the world and share the good news of Jesus Christ. We can be the people of influence and fight the evil in this world.

May God give us the grace to make Jesus’s prayer our prayer too.

Amen