

Believers in Jesus Christ have been transferred out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of Christ. Nevertheless believers remain in the world for now. They are, in fact, intentionally left in the world by Jesus for the good purposes of God. Jesus's prayer shows that it is not God's purpose that believers withdraw into Christian ghettos but they are to become resident aliens with a message to the world. The actions of Jesus expressed in His prayer help us to understand the purpose of being spiritual foreign.

### **I. What Jesus had done: He gave them the word (17:14)**

1. What had He given them: "Your word"
  - a. Though used broadly, "word" frequently (and in this context) is associated with the Father sending the Son with a message of eternal life. See, for example, John 5:24, 37–28; 8:31, 37–38, 42–43; 14:24.
  - b. The essential core of His "word" was recognizing the Person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and entrusting one's life to Him. See John 6:68–69 and 11:25–27 as well as John 8, 9, 10.
  - c. This is the word which Jesus had given the disciples and which they had believed (17:6).
2. Giving the disciples the Father's word and their reception of it resulted in hatred from the world. Receiving His word identified them with Jesus and made them outsiders (foreigners).

Through His "word" God intentionally makes a follower of Jesus Christ a spiritual alien to this world. Spiritually a believer in Christ will no longer fit in a rebellious, unregenerate world.

### **II. What Jesus was requesting: not escape but protection and consecration (17:15–18)**

1. Jesus requested their protection, not their escape (17:15–16).
  - a. Even though Jesus will return to take His own to be with Him, that is not His purpose for the present. It is not His intention that we withdraw from the world.
  - b. Jesus instead prayed that His followers be protected from the evil one. (Satan is probably in mind rather than evil in general, since (1) that has been His warning in John 12:31; 14:30; and 16:11, (2) that had been the example of Judas (John 13:27) and of Peter (Luke 22:31–32), and (3) that was the teaching of John in 1 John 5:18–19.
  - c. Jesus's followers need protection because they have been changed and their world has become enemy territory.
2. Jesus requested their consecration (17:17–18).
  - a. They were to be consecrated in the sense of being set apart from sin (cf. John 15:3; 13:10–11). And they were to be consecrated in the sense of being set apart for service, to be His witnesses (17:18; cf. 15:27). Sanctification (or consecration) has this general sense of being set apart from something to something and is the teaching about our new life in Christ in Romans 6:11. Both aspects are important.
  - b. They were consecrated by the Father and sent into the world by the Son. Though the sending of the Son into the world differed from the disciples being sent into the world, they have in common a divine purpose in the sending and a similar message, the word of the Father. Believers are sent back into the world as witnesses to Jesus, that He was sent into the world as a sacrifice for sin.

The consecrated believer is a light in a dark world. That is the purpose of being a spiritual foreigner in a foreign world. Believers strive to become understandable communicators of God's truth.

### **III. What Jesus was doing: His consecration for their sake (17:19)**

1. Jesus consecrated Himself by dedicating Himself to do the will of the Father in becoming a sacrifice for sin. (He set Himself apart for service.) Jesus also consecrated Himself by dedicating Himself wholly to obedience so that He would remain sinless and become that sinless sacrifice (cf. Hebrews 4:15; 5:8).
2. His consecration made possible the freeing of believers from sin and gave them the heart of their message, the 'word', which we are to proclaim: the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus.

God intentionally paid the price for believers to become "foreign" to this world. This was in the mind of Jesus as He went to the cross as well as His purpose that believers proclaim this message.

In the figure of the vine and the branches (John 15:1–11), the branches are cleansed to bear fruit, more fruit, and much fruit. Believers are left in the world to bear fruit in the world. As worldliness is cleansed away, believers become more foreign to the world, but stronger lights in the world to accomplish God's purposes for us in the world. Strive to be that strong light which proclaims Christ boldly in word and life.

#### *Questions for further thought and discussion:*

- Describe in your own words the difference between being chosen out of the world (John 15:19) and yet sent into the world (John 17:18).
- Why and how do believers need protection from the evil one?
- In what practical ways can we become better communicators of the gospel, while yet not becoming like the world? Where would be the dangers of becoming like the world?