

**John 17: 14-17; “Sanctify Them in Your Truth”, A Communion Sermon  
prepared by Pastor Paul Rendall and Delivered on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011,  
in the Morning Worship Service.**

To sanctify, as it is being spoken about in verse 17 by our Lord Jesus Christ, means to be set apart to God’s purposes. It is to be set apart to be changed and transformed by the grace of Christ so that we will become more holy and more like our Savior. The prayer here made by the Lord Jesus was not being made so that the Apostles alone should be sanctified, but also that you and I who believe in Christ today, might be sanctified. Verse 20 confirms this. Jesus says, “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word.” The primary instrument which God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ use in this good work of sanctification is the Word of truth. “Sanctify them by your truth,” Jesus says. “Your word is truth.” And so on this Communion Sunday we want to focus on 3 things that the word of God does to sanctify us so that we are not worldly people, in the way that we live our lives. 1<sup>st</sup> – The word of God is the primary instrument given us by God to make us different from the world. (Verse 14) 2<sup>nd</sup> – The word of God is the primary instrument given us by God in order to keep us from the evil one. (Verse 15) And 3<sup>rd</sup>ly – The word of God is the primary instrument to make us other worldly. (Verse 16) I will open up these truths in light of our partaking of the Lord’s Supper in just a few minutes.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – The word of God is the primary instrument given us by God to make us different from the world.**

Jesus says in verse 14 – “I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.” You should notice the connection that is here, between Christ’s giving to the Apostles His word, and the world’s hatred of them. The world, Jesus says, would hate the Apostles, and it will hate us too; we who have believed the Apostle’s word the Bible, because we who have believed in Jesus are not “of” this world. The reason that we are not of the world is because we have born again by the word of God. As John says in 1 John 5: 4 – “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world.” “And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.” We who have believed in Christ, have believed in the gospel, and we have been called out of spiritual darkness and brought into spiritual light and truth. “The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin.” “The Light of the World is Jesus”. “Like sunshine at noon-day His glory shone in.” “The Light of the World is Jesus.” But if the whole world is in darkness, you will find, as a believer, that the darkness does not love the light. Jesus says in John 3: 19 – “The light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” The gospel is only known and believed and received when God shines the light upon His blessed word concerning Jesus. Your heart is only cleansed from sin when you are washed with water by the Word of God. “You are clean,” Jesus says to His

Apostles, “because of the word that I have spoken to you.” (John 15: 3) The gospel and all spiritual truth are only found in the word of God. “Sanctify them in Your truth; your word is truth.” The gospel began with Jesus, the One who was really not of this world. The Bible is the written word. Jesus is the living Word. He was the light of life before ever the world was made, and He was sent from the Father in order to save us. He was sent to seek and to save that which was lost. We who have believed, believe that the Lord Jesus was not of this world in His birth, but He came into this fallen world of sin in order to save those sinners who would believe in Him.

In believing in Christ, we believe in certain truths which have been preached to us, or shared with us; truths that are plainly taught in the Bible, but which are flatly rejected by the world. For instance, Jesus is not your ordinary man. Jesus was not born in the normal way and fashion which men are used to hearing about. Jesus existed as the third person of the Divine Trinity from all of eternity past. He was the Logos, the Word who was with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the beginning when the world was made. And in this same gospel of John in Chapter 1, verse 3, it states that “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” And verse 10 says, “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.” They did not know that He was the Son of God; God made manifest in the flesh. When Jesus came into this world, He did not have an earthly father. His Father was God the Father. If He would have had an earthly father he would have been a sinner like all the rest of us who have ever been born of a woman, because sin is transmitted from and through the nature of the earthly father in his seed when a child is conceived in the womb of its mother. All men are constituted sinners because of the first man Adam’s sin. And every man who becomes a father passes on that fallen sinful nature to their offspring. The world doesn’t like to hear that they are sinners. The term “world” refers to all of those unconverted people who are outside of Christ. It is the whole world of mankind-sinners as Thomas Boston used to call them. They have not yet received or believed the word of God which is scattered like seed by the preachers of the word, and other dear Christians who share it with them. When the seed of the word falls upon the heart of a hearer of the word, it is either received upon good ground in their heart; a heart made soft and tender by God’s grace, so that it will be receptive to it; or it is received upon stony ground, or thorny ground, or stolen by the Devil before it can take root there. We are told this in Matthew 13 in the parable of the sower and the seed. But if the word is received by a heart that has been prepared by the grace of God, and that person believes in Jesus; then they are saved and they begin the life of faith which takes them away from the world in their heart. They no longer think the way that unbelieving and sinful people think and live.

And this is why believers are hated. They are hated because they have believed the truth of the word, and that word has, by the power of God’s Spirit working with it, changed the heart and mind of the one receiving it. They do not

go along with sinful ways of thinking and reasoning and acting any more. The word of God has informed them what is pleasing to God, and they aim to do it. That is why they are opposed and even hated at times. Jesus says in John 15, verse 18 to His Apostles, "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you." "If you were of the world, the world would love its own." "Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.'" "If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." "If they kept My word, they will keep yours also." "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me." Dear believer, you have been called out of this world and you are sanctified by faith in Jesus. But you are being sanctified by the word of God. You are in the world, but you are not of the world. Therefore you should not live like it. I believe, you say. How should I live? You should live in accordance with the truth of the Bible, the good word of God. You should study to live out the truth of the Bible. You should study the Bible to find out what God commands of you, and what He expects you to do in relation to everything you do in your life. You will never really know what that is, unless you regularly read the Bible and abide in the truth of it. The Bible will teach you right from wrong, and good from bad. You will come to know the 10 commandments and all the principles, and precepts, and testimonies of truth. The Bible will teach you how to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil age. You will more and more turn away from foolishness and carelessness in the way that you live. The Bible will give you all the principles of truth which you will need to sort out what is precious from what is vile in this sinful world in which you live.

If you are wise, and full of faith in God and Christ, and His word, you will live out the truth of Joshua 1: 8 and 9: "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it." "For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." "Have I not commanded you?" "Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." The truth of the Bible should be what you abide in, because you love the One who gave Himself for you, to die upon the cross, so that you might know the truth, and that the truth would set you free. Many people who think that they have started believing in Jesus, really do not want to be His disciples because they will not abide in His word. They say that they believe, but they will not remain in God's word to learn the better way than the world's way of thinking and doing. They think that believing is a simple acknowledgement that they somehow should follow Christ. The world's way is to leave God out of what they are doing, and to leave His word behind, so that God does not have anything to say to them in regard to the way that they live. Jesus in John 8: 31 said to those Jews who believed in Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed." "And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." This is what is

really hard to understand. But it needs to be thought upon. The people that Jesus spoke this to, said that they really believed in Him. But when He said it, they proved that they really did not believe in the Lord Jesus or love Him after He said this to them. In fact they hated Him and wanted to kill Him because He told them the truth of their bondage to sin. Jesus had said these words to “those Jews who had believed in Him.” But listen to how they respond to Him. Verse 33 – “They answered Him, ‘We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone.’ “How can you say, ‘You will be made free?’ “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.” Many, many people do see how pivotal this issue is, to knowing God and following God. If you cannot confess your sins and be learning to forsake them as you find them in yourself; how can you really be a Christian? You can’t, because you are still in bondage as Jesus says.

Now, as we are going to observe the Lord’s Supper in the next few minutes, each of us needs to ask ourselves the question. Do I belong to Christ? Do I love His word and abide in it day by day? Am I of the world, or do I belong to Christ? Do the people of the world in this very specific sense of what we have just talked about, love me or do they hate me? That is one of the ways that you can know that you belong to Christ; if people oppose you because of your faith. “Woe to you,” Jesus says, “when all men speak well of you.” If you only love the world, how will you be happy in heaven, where there are no worldly amusements; where there is no boastful pride of life; where there will be no lusts of the flesh? Ah, if you are a true Christian, you will someday leave all these things behind, and you will be glad to do so. The Apostles of our Lord, except Judas, knew the importance of God’s word and they would hold to it. Even with all of their weaknesses, spiritually, they would abide in God’s word, because Jesus had given it to them. The word of God is the primary instrument given by God to sanctify us.

**2ndly - The word of God is the primary instrument given us by God in order to keep us from the evil one.** (Verse 15)

“I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.” The Lord Jesus is once again praying that His Apostles and disciples would be kept by the Father. We already saw in verse 12 how He prayed that they would be kept in God’s name. Now, our Lord is even more explicit. He prays for them to be kept from the evil one. He prays that they would be kept from Satan. The words “evil one” in the original Greek are actually derived from one word – “evil”. The word “one” of “evil one” is supplied by the translators, and properly so. The word is poneron, a genitive, singular, masculine word which means; not evil in general, but evil in a person, such as the Devil, or evil men who are led by the Devil. If the world are those sinful and unbelieving people who by their making up a different way to live than that which is commanded in the Bible, it is Satan who is at the head of that world system. He was the head over all things in relation to rebellion and disobedience to God in the world then and he still is today. But because of what the Lord Jesus did at the cross, the relationship of the believer to Satan and to the world is much different

from that of the unbeliever. They are effectually kept from his destroying their souls. Turn with me over to John Chapter 12, and verse 23. Jesus has just had certain Greeks who among those who came unto worship at the feast, come looking for Him. They told Phillip and Phillip told Andrew and they both came and told Jesus. “But Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.” “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.” “He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also.” “If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.” “Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say?” “Father save Me from this hour?” “But for this purpose I came to this hour.” “Father glorify Your name.” Look down at verse 31: “Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.” “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” “This He said, signifying by what death He would die.”

This is a very significant phrase. And Jesus is speaking of the Devil as the “ruler” or “prince” of this world being cast out. What does this mean? Well, the Devil is certainly not the true ruler of this world; God is. Satan is the one who did through his deception become the ruler of this world through the willful rebellion of men against God and His word. Now the “whole world lies in the lap of the evil one.” Now the whole world is under His sway. He came into the garden at the Beginning and tried to fatally ruin God’s highest creation on earth – even the first man and woman. He came there denying the truth of God’s word; that Adam and Eve would die if they disobeyed and ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam disobeyed and he fell from his original righteousness. God gave a promise to the first pair, upon which the salvation of all of God’s people rested. It was the promise of the Seed of the woman; the descendant of Adam, and Abraham, and David coming to deal with Satan. But in that promise was also a judgment. In Genesis 3: 15, God promised that the Seed of the woman would crush the Serpent’s head, and he would only be able to bruise Christ’s heel. This is what happened at the cross. Satan needed to be judged, and cast out in order that the kingdoms of this world would become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. Satan, because of man’s fall, had taken it upon himself to attempt to rule over all fallen men in unrighteousness, just as God truly does rule over all men in righteousness. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness for everyone who believes. He has succeeded in building a kingdom for himself in the hearts of men and women who do not know God, and who do not want the true God to rule over them. Jesus’ going to the cross, which is what is meant by His “being lifted up”; Jesus’ being crucified, and being buried in the tomb; and what would come from that; in terms of God’s people being saved, is referred to as His becoming “a grain of wheat, falling into the ground and dying.” His death would bear much fruit; the fruit being the people that He would actually save by His death. A part of this great work of redemption would be the dethroning of Satan

from having dominion, or rule, over the hearts of all of God's Elect people. They were most certainly purchased by Christ's death, and as a result, God the Father and God the Spirit in conjunction with Christ confer the blessings of the New Birth and justification upon sinners whom God has chosen to eternal life.

This is what we celebrate this morning as we come to the Lord's table. The ruler of this world has been dethroned from our lives. Sin no longer has dominion over us, but also, Satan does not have rule over us any longer either. Another part of Christ's death would be His casting Satan out of His dark Lordship over all this world; over all flesh. Jesus said this in verses 1 and 2 of the chapter that we are studying. "Father, the hour has come." "Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him." Jesus has obtain dominion over all nations and all peoples by His death on the cross. Satan has been cast out as the ruler of this world. The Lord Jesus, by virtue of His death, has also been given the ability to draw all peoples to Himself. He has power over all flesh, but He will only actually save those who have been given Him by the Father. The Father draws the Elect effectually to Christ by His grace, in accordance with His mercy. The Son, by His being lifted up, draws all men in general to look and to consider what He did. That He, being the Lord of Glory, did not do this for Himself, but for sinners who would look to Him and live, is clearly set forth in God's word written down by the Apostles for us. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, (just as the brazen serpent was put on a pole by Moses in the wilderness, and whoever looked to it lived) will draw all men unto Me." This death of Jesus' will effectually do the same to all who will look; they shall live spiritually. The Lord Jesus shall indeed "see the travail of His soul and be satisfied." It is true that "God has put all things in subjection under Christ's feet, as it says Hebrews 2: 8. "For in that God the Father put all things in subjection under Him, He left nothing that is not put under Him." "But now we do not yet see all things put under Him." There is a progression to this dethroning of Satan in the calling of all the Elect, and Christ's kingdom's advance in and through this fallen world. It is like good leaven in the lump of dough that eventually will permeate the whole. Even so, will Christ's kingdom advance, in this present evil age, to greater glory in this world. The Apostles were kept from the evil one, and so too, shall all who are called to Christ through faith in the promise of the word. They shall be kept from being finally deceived and from being cast away themselves, because the reigning power of the ruler of this world has been cast out of each one of God's Elect people.

This is not only true of individuals, as I have hinted at, but it is also true of the kingdoms of this world. The kingdoms of this world have, because of Christ's death, and resurrection, and ascension, become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ. And He shall reign forever and ever. Christ must sit at the Father's right hand until all of His enemies are put under His feet. The gospel will have its day of power. "The Lord will send the rod of Christ's strength out of Zion, saying, Rule in the midst of Your enemies." (Psalm 110, verse 2) The Father actually will

bring all kingdoms of this world under Christ's righteous rule because it is something which happened at the cross, in judgment form. The conveying of the title to begin to reign over all the earth was given to Jesus then. But the actual subjection of those kingdoms will take place when many among these kingdoms actually hear the gospel in future years, and are saved by it. The binding of Satan in regard to the gospel conquering among the nations has not come yet, but it will come at the set time as the Spirit is poured out upon the kingdoms and the nations in accordance with God's sovereign will and timing. (Psalm 102, verses 12-22) But you can be assured that the casting out of Satan has taken place in regard to all individual believers, meritoriously and really at the cross, and it is brought about really and actually in relation to God's work in each believer's conversion, so that each and every one is transferred from the kingdom of darkness and brought into the kingdom of God's dear Son. (Colossians 1: 13) And so from that moment onward, they are "kept by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1: 5) As you come down to the front to partake of the Communion now, will you not remember Christ by remembering these two mighty truths that I have tried to impress upon you this morning? You should abide in God's word as it is God's primary instrument that He uses to sanctify you; to see that you become a more holy person. Christ Himself gave it to His Apostles to give to you. Thank Him for His precious word which sanctifies you. And then secondly, the word of God is the primary instrument given us by God to keep us from the evil one. And thank the Lord that He has cast the Devil out of your life. Pray that you will, by His power, be able to defeat his schemes that he has, to seek to derail your becoming a more useful and fruitful Christian, through remembering what He died to bring about in your life; a faithful and true heart. This is what He died for. This is what He lives for now. Let's come on down front now, and I will have a few more words for you there.

**Now 3rdly and finally – The word of God is the primary instrument by which we keep ourselves unstained from the world, and become other worldly.** (Verse 16)

"They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world." "Sanctify them by Your truth." "Your word is truth." Jesus was not of the world. His whole heart was engaged to do the will of God and to keep His commandments. When He came into the world, He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." "By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." We have been set apart to God's purposes, and one of the greatest of those is that we become holy. Sanctification is not like justification. Justification is God's forgiving all of your sins for Jesus' sake, and imputing Christ's righteousness to your legal account. He does this and the only part that you have in it is to believe it and to receive it. You cannot improve upon it except to continually thank God for these blessings. Once you believe, you can never become more justified than you are now. But sanctification is different. It is a work which is continually going on in your heart and in your life, from the moment

that you first believe until the moment that you die. You can improve upon what you have first been given in being given the gift of a regenerate heart. You do have a very important role to play in your sanctification. Your role is to keep yourself. Listen to 1 John 5: 18 – “We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.” “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.”

I hope that you will think with me for just a few moments about this fact in relation to your taking this Supper. Satan is not only interested in keeping believers from their doing the will of God in general ways; he is even more interested in keeping them from doing God’s will in the very particular ways which God’s word commands. He is very interested in their not abiding in the word of truth, and their not keeping God’s commandments. Jesus however says, “If you love Me keep My commandments.” James Chapter 1, verse 27 says this: “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.” If these things are so, then will you not remember why Christ died? He died so that your sins could all be taken away, and that you would receive a new heart which longs to keep His commandments. Will you not ask Him to help you to do what He commands, and covenant with Him that you will pray to be more holy and more useful to Him? That is why He died. And that is why He lives.