

# Divine Witness Protection #2

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[ 0 : 00 ] Kind of the middle portion of this section of the prayer. Here Jesus speaking once again. I am praying for them, his disciples.

! I am not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them.

And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world. And I am coming to you, Holy Father.

Keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost, except the son of destruction, that the scripture might be fulfilled.

But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

[ 1 : 04 ] That is the word of the Lord. Please be seated. C.S. Lewis wrote one of his more popular books, which was really creative.

Many of you are aware of the book, The Screwtape Letters. Because in this fictional tale, he pictures a senior demon coaching a junior demon on how to tempt people.

In the second letter, he writes this. Now, this is Uncle Screwtape is the senior. He's writing to his nephew, Wormwood.

My dear Wormwood, I note with grave displeasure that your patient has become a Christian. Do not indulge the hope that you will escape the usual penalties.

Indeed, in your better moments, I trust you would hardly even wish to do so. In the meantime, we must make the best of the situation.

[ 2 : 25 ] There is no need for despair. Hundreds of these adult converts have been reclaimed after a brief sojourn in the enemy's camp and are now with us.

All the habits of the patient, both mental and bodily, are still in our favor. Remember, Jesus prays for us.

That's mind-boggling all by itself. Jesus prays for our protection so that we can stand against the spiritual forces of darkness in the world, those forces that seek to defile and deceive us.

That is our strength. That is our hope. We are protected by the living God, no matter what the devil tries.

We are in this section, as you know, verses 6 through 19, that he is praying specifically for his disciples now. He is praying in particular for these first disciples.

[ 3 : 39 ] But again, there is application big time for us as well. We began by noting last time that the reality of divine witness protection is Jesus is praying for those who belong to God.

That's what he keeps, all mine are yours, yours are mine. This constant emphasis on knowing that we belong to God and that we know the Father and we know the Son and we know the Father has sent the Son.

And so we have confidence in everything that the Son says to us. But then Jesus says something very striking, and that's where I began my reading. We touched on it last time.

We hit it pretty good last time, but there's something I want to tease out. He says he's only praying for his disciples, not the world. And he's praying for the disciples because the disciples belong to him and his Father.

I want to tease it out just a little bit more if you don't mind. Remember, he's praying for those who belong to God. And then I'll just read it one more time because it's just striking.

[ 4 : 52 ] I am praying for them, my people. I am not praying for the world, but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. Again, emphasis upon belonging to him.

But here's the thing. Many Christians, and I'm sympathetic because I've done it too, we try to avoid the us-them mentality.

The us-them language. And there's good things about that. If our goal is to avoid an ungodly sense of superiority and righteousness, then we are right to avoid the us-them.

Because we are not that. We are not superior, and we are not more righteous than anyone. He called us out of darkness, not because we were light, but called us into the light.

He called us, as Paul says in Ephesians 1, not because we were blameless, but he called us to make us blameless in his sight. So we can never, uh-oh, what happened?

[ 6 : 04 ] Did it do? Are we good? Okay, thank you. So we should never think in the us-them mentality that somehow we are superior.

Amen. But here's the problem. I'm seeing this more and more. Maybe you have too.

That as followers of Jesus, we tend not to want to appear different. So much of evangelism in our country seeks to be like the world to win the world.

In this prayer, Jesus is making a distinction between his people and the world. He's not praying for the world.

He's making a distinction. Which means, in our evangelism, we must be careful that we understand there is a difference.

[ 7 : 10 ] And we should not seek to minimize the biblical difference between the church and the world. Between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world.

Because if we're not different, then we have nothing to offer. Zero to offer. Just a little bit of Christian language and a Bible verse sprinkled on to make it sound palatable.

You get crunk in the world, well, come on and get crunk in the church. So worship starts to look more and more like a rock or hip-hop concert.

I've been to places where the smoke machines. As we're worshiping the living God, there are smoke machines pumping in. This is a rock concert. I thought the church was on fire.

I'm not lying. I started reaching for my kids. I'm looking around for the exit. Because I'm saying, but then I realized nobody else was running. Where is the sense of the holy presence of the living God who is to be feared?

[ 8 : 31 ] We baptize workaholicism and greed and call it following our calling and walking in the blessing of prosperity. We preach self-esteem psychology from the pulpits so people feel good about themselves and their failures and find the church a safe place.

Instead of the gospel which displays the love of God but yet calls us to communal, holy living and self-denial.

We turn our churches into Disneyland with loads of fun, shallow teaching and shallow discipleship and call it reaching the youth. Too often message is what?

What's the message? You can be a Christian and still have fun. And yet our kids are crying out for something deeper. And at times they're even begging for it.

They need to know God. Why are they walking away from God when they go to college or high school? They haven't met the living God. They haven't seen the glory.

[ 9 : 36 ] There's nothing in there. There's a distinction between the church and the world. The world needs to see the majesty of a savior who says some hard things.

Yet he is worth living and dying for. There has to be a distinction. And Jesus makes it. He makes it. I'm not praying for the world. But I am praying for my disciples. What?

You say, well, hold it now. If the Lord isn't praying for the world, how? Does it mean the world doesn't get any blessings? Does it mean the world, people in the world can expect nothing from God?

Well, that wouldn't be accurate either. The Bible and also our theology makes a distinction in the scriptures called common grace.

[ 10 : 47 ] Common grace. Common grace is the grace that God gives to all people. Whether they are walking with him or not, God blesses the unrighteous and the righteous.

And remember, the righteous is only righteous because of faith in Jesus. They're not righteous in and of themselves. So be clear. Matthew 5 says, He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

My pastor, Dr. Boyce, to find his definition of common grace, speaks of the non-salvific universal grace God shows to all humanity, regardless of their status as believers, unbelievers, by which he

restrains sin, upholds moral order, and bestows general blessings like sunlight, rain, and life-sustaining, good-producing gifts.

Because if God did not distort common grace on the world, the world would just implode. God is restraining sin. But that's not the same as God's special or saving grace.

That only comes to those who are in Christ, who he's chosen out of the world. Dr. Boyce, again, the unmerited sovereign favor of God directed toward the elect, whereby he acts to reconcile sinners through Jesus Christ entirely apart from human merit or work, is a sovereign supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that transforms rather than merely assisting a person.

[12:26] Such people are forgiving their sins, adopted into God's family with all the privileges thereof, and they are prayed for by the eternal Son so that they will not ever be lost.

There's a distinction here. The world lives for its own glory. Those for whom Jesus prayed live for his glory.

That puts us at odds. There's a, there's a, when the world seeks self-glorification, and while we who are in Christ seek Christ's glorification, there's a distinction.

They're at odds. We're at odds. Because the world lives for its own glory. Why so many people drawing attention to themselves?

Our hair, how we dress, how we look, what we own, what we compost.

[13:33] Why are people drawing attention to themselves so much? Because that's all we got. when you, when you leave God out, all you have is to glorify yourself.

To make yourself feel good and feel better and, and to make other people like you and think you're worth something. When you leave God out, you have to seek your own glory.

Because you can't get up in the morning unless you think you're worth something. But when you see Jesus, when you come to Christ, he tells you, you are worth something.

His living and dying for you says that God loves you, that, that you are distinct, that you are different, and that you are beloved, and that you do matter.

You don't have to manufacture it for yourself. You have to beg other people to give you glory. Jesus gives you glory.

[14:46] The glory of being a son and a daughter. The glory of knowing that you were loved before the world began, and you're loved now, and you will be loved into eternity.

And Jesus prays for that. He prays for us that we will stand in that because the world is pushing and pulling, and the enemy of our souls is pushing and pulling so that we'll deny that.

Or worse, we just won't even see it. Blinded.

Blinded by the glitz and glamour. And deceived by the lies. The world says, draw attention to yourself, but Jesus says, Matthew 5, 16, in the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

When the spotlight falls on a maturing Christian, we don't say, thank you very much, I'm wonderful. I'm here because I've worked so hard.

[15:57] I trained. I went to school. I, you know, I did, I mean, and leave it there. You can say those things, but you better go further. You can say, yeah, the truth is the truth, right?

You did work hard. But ha, Paul said it so better. I worked harder than them all, but not I. It was the grace of God that was with me.

A distinction from the church, from the disciples of Jesus, and the world.

Jesus does not pray for the world because the world does not seek his glory. It seeks his own. And he prays for his people because in the midst of the world where we shine as lights and when we are salt in the midst of decay, in the midst of that, we're always being pulled upon.

So he prays for us that we'll continue, that we'll be strengthened. We're going to talk more about it, but I just want you to hear it. I want you to see it. Jesus paid the ransom for your sins to buy you out of the slave market of sin for himself.

[17:14] And he bought you for himself. You don't belong to you anymore. You're not yours anymore if you belong to Jesus. You're not living for you anymore.

It's like Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6, 19 and 20, do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you whom you have from God? So let's stop right there.

You are a temple of the Holy Spirit. Do you understand? You're a holy ground. You're a holy ground. Don't go looking for holy ground.

You are a holy ground. If I never go to Israel, so what? Holy ground's right here. I'm looking at it right now. The Holy Land is wherever the church is.

Oh, y'all don't believe me. I know y'all, y'all that left behind theology. God bless you. You are not, then he says, you are not your own for you were bought with a price.

[18:19] Now watch this, so glorify God in your body. The distinction between the church and the world, once again, is that the church, the disciples of Jesus, whom he is praying for, live to give our bodies to him, to give our bodies for his glory, to, in our actions, he's talking about interaction, and what we do, what we say, even how we think, we are seeking his honor and majesty, and to make his praise glorious.

And the world says, no way. No, never. It's like the parable Jesus said, the world is saying, we will not have this man to rule over us.

We're saying, we submit to the king in his kingdom. And he is everything. I'm not praying for the, I want you to just understand, he's not praying for the world, but praying for you.

Because you belong to him. And you seek his glory. Technically, what I want you to notice here is that he's praying for those who truly need God's protection.

You know, he tells us that he's leaving. Verse 11. He's leaving. I'm no longer in the world, but they are in the world and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name. Listen, I'm leaving.

[19:52] We need his protection because Jesus himself says, I will not be physically present with you any longer. So he asked the Father to keep his people in the Father's name that he has given Jesus.

The idea is that the Father will keep us forever. The word keep here means to guard, to preserve, unblemished, to hold fast to.

He's saying, Father, hold on to them. Hold them. Don't let them guard them from the world, for the world is prominent in their lives.

Guard them, for they're in the midst of it. As M.C. Hammer once said, they put me in the mix. And we in the mix, y'all.

Guard them. And all throughout verses 11 down to verse 18, this idea of guard from the world is extremely prominent. Now what does he mean by the name you have given me?

[20:52] Guard them in that. This is this fear, this fear in which Jesus guard the disciples while physically present. He guarded them in the Father's name.

But it's also this fear in which their protection must continue. The Father's name refers to his power, his authority, his character.

The Father gave the Son the right to operate, as it were, in his name, in his authority, in his power, in his character. Because the Son is also God.

Makes sense. Jesus revealed the Father's will and power in order to secure his sheep, his people. Here's how he put it in John 10, 27 to 30.

My sheep hear my voice. I know them. They follow me. I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand.

[21:49] My Father, who is given to me, is greater than all. And no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one. Jesus and the Father operate in the same power and the same authority, holding, what for?

To secure the sheep. To keep them. So then, now Jesus is leaving, he asks the Father to keep protecting his people in his name.

I love how Proverbs 18 says it, and we're going to look at this for a second. The name of the Lord is a high, it's a strong tower. The righteous run into it and is safe.

In that culture, a strong tower was a place of impenetrable, impenetrable, you can't get in. How about that? Safety. Impenetrable.

Thank you. Meaning God's nature, God's character, and God's power as revealed in the Bible, as revealed in Christ, is what protects us.

[23:03] The righteous experience this protection because they are righteous through faith alone and Jesus alone. Not because they've done good. So the righteous, as it were, run into this tower.

They run into the power and the presence and the authority of the living God. Safety isn't, now once, one right, another right, safety isn't automatic.

Faith in action is required. When believers face fear, anxiety, or temptation, they actively run to God through prayer, trusting in his promises, his word, relying on his strength rather than their own.

Some of us fight the protection the Lord wants to give us because instead of running to him when we're facing temptation, when we're facing conundrums, when we're facing pain and difficulty, we tend to run the other way.

I'm talking about Christians now. now, now, let's be honest, it's sometimes easier to trust what you can see than what you can't see.

[ 24 : 26 ] Is that okay? I mean, can I be honest with you? I mean, it may be different, but, you know, I think, I see not, okay, you're with me. And so, it becomes a very human thing, right, when we are hurting that we run to those or to that which we can see.

but here's the thing, as you mature in Christ, the eyes of your heart begin to see something more than what your eyes of your head see.

You begin to see the reality of Christ, the reality of the living God, the reality of the cross and the crucifixion and the resurrection of the living Christ.

You begin to see, and this, and what helps us? God gave us sacraments to remind us of the reality that we don't always see with our eyes.

He reminds us that he is real and what Christ accomplished is just as tangible as the bread or the juice you're going to take in a few minutes.

[ 25 : 36 ] That's why we come to the table. That's why we baptize. Reminding ourselves of the reality. And then, but more than that, even better, we come to the book and we see the history of redemption, what God has done throughout the world over the ages.

This is a history in many ways of the work of God. so that when trials and tribulations do come, when pain does come and it will come and conundrums happen, instead of running to the world for answers, running to TED Talks for answers, running to YouTube to figure it out, running to some app with AI telling you it will pray for you.

I wish I was making that up. Christians right now are running to AI priests and pastors. We don't see the living God.

We don't see Christ and his benefit. We don't see what he's offering. We don't see who he is. And so, the idea here is that he's a strong tower and the righteous run into him and are safe.

If we don't run into him, then we're not so safe. We can't be lost, but we're going to get buffeted and beat up pretty good. And then we want to blame God.

[ 27 : 11 ] It's like, here's a strong tower and you run, oh no, here's a good one. Here, the three little pigs. Which house, which house do you want to run into? Sticks and straw.

That's where we go. That's the, the world offers sticks and straw to protect us. All the world isms, sticks and straw. Oh, there's some good things. Don't get me, I'm not saying the world is common grace, remember?

There's some good things there. Here's the thing, but they're not ultimate things. Good for a minute, good for a while. But when you run into the high tower of the Lord and on his word, you find something that's eternal, something that's a rock beneath your feet that will hold you up for now and forever.

I don't know about you, but I'm not interested in being somebody's pork dinner. I'm going to the brick house, the high tower, because I know I'll be safe.

Jesus kept the early disciples safe, and he says that they will be one, they will be unified. unified. Now, we're going to talk about unity later, but I want you to understand something here.

[ 28 : 24 ] When he talks about their unity, he stands something specific about them. What is he saying? Who were they? The early disciples were the ones who gave us the New Testament in particular.

They were the ones who bore witness to Jesus. They saw everything that he did, and they went throughout the world telling people about him. Listen, listen, why do we have four gospels and not one?

You have four gospels from four different perspectives telling the same story. That does not contradict itself. The same story. He prayed for their unity so that the message would go out as a unified whole.

Their unity was essential. Because what would have happened if Peter said, no, it didn't happen like that, Matthew. No, hey, no, no, I didn't say that.

No, no, no, you're quoting me wrong. Look, I walked in the water, but I didn't really sink. I mean, I was kind of, I didn't really, but you know, can you imagine what would have happened if they had

done that?

[ 29 : 37 ] Jesus prays that they would be one, kept and unified, that they would have a unified testimony to tell the world about Jesus and that we would have a solid rock to stand upon as we open the New Testament writings, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and Paul's writings, and all the other writings in the New Testament, and we will know we have an eyewitness account to the reality of Jesus and we can bet our lives on it.

Yes, Jesus has to protect us because without him we cannot stand. We will not, they would not have been unified.

We will not be unified and we still struggle. We can come back to this later in the sermon. He's going to preach to us about unity and the church and we're going to hit that hard and we're going to have some fun with that.

Amen. But you've got to understand right now that there's a distinction between you and the world, between the church and the world, that Jesus prayed for that distinction.

He wants you to stand out for him. He wants your light to shine, not to make yourself look good and feel good about you. He's not against you feeling good, don't get me wrong.

[ 30 : 57 ] But he wants you to point, when they point the finger at you to say thank you, you say you're welcome, but let me tell you about Jesus. Let me tell you why.

Let me tell you what motivates me. It isn't, I don't do good for you so I can feel good about me. Have you noticed that's how the world talks? Notice the interviews of the rich and wealthy.

They talk about doing good, it makes me feel so good when I do. That's a common statement, common statement. Is that our testimony? Is that all we have to say?

It makes me feel good? Well, I hope it'll make you feel bad, amen. But when you do good, the idea is that we then turn around and say, but Jesus sent me.

without him, I can do nothing. Without him, I have, I don't want to help you without him. Without him, I don't want to do good, I want to do, I want to focus on me.

[ 32 : 00 ] How do we handle the praise? Who do we point to? Jesus said his people, his sheep, these guys he's praying for, they glorify me.

who are you glorifying? Have you been snatched by the love of God? Have you been overwhelmed by the mercy and the forgiveness of your sins of a living God?

Do you know you're not alone? Wherever you are, do you know he's with you? Do you bask in that? Does that give you joy? Does that give you hope? I hope so, because it's true if you belong to Jesus.

And you're not of the world. You're not like everybody else. To my young people, if you're walking with Christ, you're not like everybody else, and it's okay to be different.

It's okay. Matter of fact, you must. He wants you to be different. Not to be weird, but to be different, to live, to march to the beat of a different drum, to hear his voice and live in a way that honors him more than anything else.

[ 33 : 17 ] You will be different if you do this. You will be different. You won't have to try. Just follow Jesus. And don't be ashamed of the gospel. God loves you.

Let's pray. Father, thank you that Jesus prayed for us. Thank you that he makes a distinction between us and the world. And because of his prayer, Father, we know we are safe.

We know we can. We know we belong to you. We know you will never let us go. You are our high tower, the strong tower that we run into, and we know that we are safe when we run into that tower. So, Lord, help us to do that. Help us to find protection and peace in knowing that you, you are God, are watching over us.

And keep us, Lord, from being afraid. Keep us from fear. Keep us from anxiety. May we rest in you. In Jesus' name, Amen.