

## The Enemy

*“I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.” John 17:15-16.*

These are the words that Jesus spoke to God in the High Priestly prayer in John 17. Curiously, Jesus asks for Christians not to be taken out of the world, but for God to keep Christians from the “evil one.” Why would Jesus ask for this?

Firstly, Christ prayed for Christians not to be taken out of the world immediately because there is still work to be done. There are still souls in need of salvation. God wants us to be active workers for Him and for His cause. When God decides that things will finally end, then things will finally end. But for now, He does not consider the end of all things necessary.

Secondly, why would Christ pray for Christians to be kept from the “evil one?” Christianity places Christians in a strange position. We are to be in the world but not of the world. We are foreigners in exile, soldiers in enemy territory. It is true that Christians are a part of the kingdom of God, but there's still the kingdom of the ruler of this world – and this kingdom is battling the kingdom of God. It's easy to be blind to this battle when a person is an enemy of God. Why? Because when a person is an enemy of God, they have an enemy that has an immense love for them. So they're serving a master, the “evil one,” who is giving them what they want, plus they have a bonus: They have an enemy that loves them. However, when a person in the world switches sides and comes to Christ, things change. In fact, many Christians have found that, even though becoming a Christian certainly helped their eternity, their short and physical lives have been made harder. This is because, while they have chosen the side that has already won the war, they now have an enemy that is acting much more like we expect an enemy to behave. They now have an enemy that hates them.

A follower of Christ is a part of a team that has already won the war. But that means that we now have an enemy that is going to try to pull as many down with him as he can. The war has been won, but there are still battles to fight. And those of us fighting would do well to understand that Christ didn't pray for our protection for no reason.

**[DJR]**