

about this book

This volume *Who Is Your Father?* could include the sub-title, *And Who Are You?* Based on John's Gospel, the title is taken from John 8:19, 25 and 53, a conglomerate of the three pertinent questions asked of Jesus by the Jews, 'Where is your father? . . . Who are you? . . . Who do you think you are?'

The chapters are based on teaching delivered in a pastoral setting and seek to express the truth that John's is truly the Gospel of the Father.

John Calvert trained for the Ministry in the Baptist Theological College of New South Wales. He is married to Jenny and with their three teenage sons lives in Adelaide. He has pastored Baptist Churches in New South Wales and South Australia and lectured in the S.A. Baptist Theological College and the Bible College of S.A., plus the House of Tabor, in Homiletics, New Testament and Theology. Overseas preaching has taken him to the U.S.A., Japan, South Korea and Singapore. His interests include music, sport, reading and of course, writing.

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Who Is Your Father?

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To my family, that they might continue
to experience who their Father is

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FOREWORD

This is a selection of sermons from John's Gospel. They are meant to be relational and encouraging so that we might understand and experience the impact of grace and truth within our lives.

For any sections that have been 'lifted' from sources not acknowledged, I trust I will be forgiven. Basically the words printed are just as they were preached, but obviously some sections have been altered for the written presentation.

As a Pastor who loves the pastoral ministry, I have a heart concern for my brother Pastors. They are at liberty to use these messages in their own ministries, for I am indebted to those who taught and ministered to me.

My personal and deep gratitude to the Rev. Geoffrey Bingham and the New Creation Team for their prayerful and practical support in the preparation of this volume, and to Beryl Skewes for her patient typesetting.

INTRODUCTION

In his preface to *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, Richard Lovelace writes, 'The instruments through which God works in the church are human beings. If our hearts and minds are not properly transformed, we are like musicians playing untuned instruments, or engineers working with broken ill-programmed computers. The attunement of the heart is essential to the outflow of grace. This is not to emphasize faith and experience over works and social action. We must be active in the work of God's Kingdom but recognize that we will only be effective in this through the transformation of our own experience. Concentration on reformation without revival leads to skins without wine; concentration on revival without reformation soon loses the wine for want of skins'.

John's Gospel is a thrilling story of life and truth through knowing God's Son, Jesus Christ. John explains that God works through His Spirit in the church, i.e. on human beings, to transform us through His grace so that we naturally reveal Christ.

CHAPTER ONE

**BELIEVING THE
WORD BECAME FLESH**

JOHN 1:1–14

I'm not sure how long I stood on that corner. Maybe a few short minutes before dodging the traffic to the other side. But my mind was catapulted into John's eye-witness account of the Crucifixion.

... so the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Carrying his own cross, he went out to The Place of the Skull (which in Aramaic is called Golgotha). Here they crucified him, and with him two others— one on each side and Jesus in the middle (John 19:16–18).

This was the Word made flesh, the one who revealed the Father.

I had arrived in Jerusalem late the previous night. Anxious to visit the Garden Tomb, I jostled through tourists and locals. Checking the traffic flow at a corner before crossing the road, I looked to the right. The bus depot was in full operation. My eyes climbed the cliff above the buses; and were rivetted with amazement.

Others had told me but now I believed for myself. Skull Hill, the place called Calvary, looked down at me with its eyeless sockets. Minutes passed as I looked and concentrated on that busy and significant scene. This was where the Christ was crucified, ‘outside a city wall’.

John’s is a different type of writing to the synoptics. There is no genealogy, no account of His birth, for He was ‘in the beginning’. Nothing about His boyhood or temptation, nor the Transfiguration, nor the appointing of the disciples. There are no parables, no account of the Ascension, and no reference to what is called ‘the great commission’. But He is referred to as the Word, the Creator, the Only Begotten of the Father, the Lamb of God, and in the Revelation as the great I AM.

John and his brother James were the sons of Zebedee the fisherman, and Salome. He had been a follower of John the Baptist and during the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian, he was banished into exile on Patmos. He lived there to extreme old age and was the last of the twelve apostles. During this time he wrote the Gospel and the Revelation, somewhere between 80 and 100 A.D., and his was the last of the New Testament writings. Jerusalem had been destroyed by the Romans under Titus in 70 A.D., false teachers had arisen, denying that Jesus was the Son of God come in the flesh, and John, as the eye-witness to the Crucifixion and the disciple whom Jesus loved, wrote to put the lie to these false teachings.

Many scholars suggest that John also wrote in order to refute the teaching of Cerinthus. This heretic taught that Jesus was merely human, the natural son of Joseph and Mary. He taught that at His baptism, the Christ in the form of a dove descended on Jesus but left Him on the eve of His suffering, so that it was not Christ who suffered, died and rose again, but

the human Jesus.

Apart from the key words, the theme of the apostle John’s writing is the conflict between faith and unbelief. John the apostle begins with the rejection on the part of Israel (v. 11), and culminates with the Crucifixion and Resurrection. Throughout the Book we see the Jews refusing to accept the evidence and growing harder and harder in their unbelief. But on the other hand there is a small group of people willing to believe on Jesus Christ; the disciples, a nobleman and his family, the Samaritans, a paralytic, a blind man, and others. The same situation exists today. The religious world at large will not believe on Christ, but here and there is the faithful remnant who accept Him as the Son of God.

The Jews began their controversy with Jesus after the miracle in chapter 5, because He healed a man on the Sabbath. In chapters 7 through to 12, the conflict became more severe and several times they tried to arrest and stone Him. Then the climax came with the arrest in the Garden and the Crucifixion.

There are three other crisis events: chapter 6, when the multitudes left Jesus after wanting to make Him King; chapter 12, when the people refused to believe on Jesus; and chapter 19, when they crucified Him. In the first crisis they wanted to make Jesus King, and yet they left Him. In the second they hailed Jesus as King and yet rejected Him. And in the third they cried out, ‘We have no king but Caesar!’

1. HE IS THE WORD

John 1:1–14 takes up several important themes in the Gospel and we will spotlight some of these.

John 1:1–3 and 14. Here we see that the Word is the Logos. He is there when time commences—He is with God—He is

God. See John 14:9 (cf. Col. 1:16–17; Heb. 1:1–2).

2. HE IS THE LIGHT

John 1:4–13. God’s first creative act in Genesis 1 was producing light, for life comes from light. Jesus is the true Light, the original Light from which all other light has its source (v. 5).

3. HE IS THE SON OF GOD

There are six people in the Gospel who call Him the Son of God—John the Baptist, Nathanael, Peter, the healed blind man, Martha and Thomas. But the man who will not believe that Jesus is God’s Son cannot be saved (8:24).

4. HE IS THE CHRIST

This is the Messiah, the Anointed One. Even the Samaritans were looking for Him to appear (4:25 and 42). But any Jew who said He was the Christ was thrown out of the synagogue (9:22).

5. HE IS THE LAMB OF GOD

Note 1:29 (cf. Gen. 22:8, ‘God will provide himself the sacrifice . . .’). The Passover Lamb in Exodus 12 and the Sacrificial Lamb in Isaiah 53 pointed the way for Messiah to come. There were many lambs in the Old Testament, but Christ is the Lamb of God. The lambs in the Old Testament sacrifices merely covered sin; but Christ takes away sin. The Old Testament lambs were for Israel alone; but Jesus Christ

died for the whole world.

6. HE IS THE KING OF ISRAEL

Israel was tired of Roman rule and wanted a king. Because Jesus fed them they wanted to make Him king, but He departed, for that was not His concept of the Kingdom. When Jesus did offer Himself as King, the same crowd that welcomed Him said, ‘We have no king but Caesar!’.

7. HE IS THE SON OF MAN

John 1:50 and 51. This title comes from Daniel 7:13–14, and every Jew knew it meant deity.

* * *

Jesus Christ is the Word of God in reflecting the mind of God and revealing God to man (v. 18). The expression ‘word’ is only used in 1:1, 1:14, I John 1:1 and Revelation 19:13. ‘The Word was with God’—face to face in the closest possible fellowship with the Father, and He took supreme delight in this communication. The Word is fully divine. Therefore ‘the Word was God’. The full emphasis on Christ’s deity was revealed in the original language where the predicate preceded the subject, i.e. God was the Word. The Word expresses or reveals God. NEB: ‘What God was, the Word was’, He has the deity of the whole Godhead.

He is co-equal, co-eternal (v. 2).

Jesus Christ created all things as co-operating within the

Godhead. He was not created; He is eternal. This questions evolution or theistic evolution (v. 3).

Not through Him but in Him was life (v. 4). From all eternity life resided in the Word. Life means light, i.e. the fulness of God's essence, His attributes of holiness, truth, love and sovereignty. This life is present in the Word.

Notice verse 14: 'And the word became flesh'. See I John 4:2, 'By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God'. The verb 'became' has special significance. Not 'became' in the sense of ceasing to be what He was before. When Lot's wife became a pillar of salt, she ceased to be the wife of Lot because she was overtaken in the lava from the eruption, but when Lot becomes the father of Moab and Ammon, he remained Lot. So it is here. The Word becomes flesh but remains the Word. The second person of the Trinity assumes human nature without laying aside the divine. John everywhere insists against heretical teaching that the divine and human nature of Christ became fully united without ever being fused. Jesus was totally human, and this is taught in the Scriptures. We cannot fully grapple with this because the relation of the two natures remains a mystery beyond our comprehension. But the eternal Word was perfect in Godhead and perfect in man-hood. He comes on the human scene as man.

'The word became flesh and lived a while among us.' He assumed human nature permanently and pitched His tent among men. We 'beheld his glory'. The word 'beheld' is more than simply our English expression, 'we have seen'. It includes physical sight, but also means deep scrutiny. It is not an absent-minded or quick look, but reflection, examination with care. It signifies that while Jesus was walking amongst them, the eye and mind of John and the other witnesses

examined and contemplated this Word become flesh. To some extent they penetrated the mystery of who He was, for they came to see His glory.

'WE HAVE BEHELD HIS GLORY'

CHAPTER TWO

LIFE AND LIGHT AND GLORY

JOHN 1:9–14

The story is told of a ship’s captain who ordered the cabin boy to take the wheel while he rested. ‘Just keep the bow on that star’, the Captain ordered. Later when he returned to the bridge he observed that the cabin boy had lost his bearings and was going in the opposite direction. ‘I told you to steer toward that star’, reprimanded the Captain. ‘But Skipper, we passed that star a long time ago’, the boy replied.

Like the cabin boy, many of us have lost our bearings. Like him we thought we had passed the star. We thought we had outgrown God. Christians face this as well as the un-believer, for there are so many who have made some type of commitment to Christ but have never been established in the basics of the faith. Their behaviour and attitude acknowledge that the issues of grace, forgiveness and the Spirit-filled life are simply terms rather than demonstration of a relationship with the Lord.

H. G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw began their literary careers with an uncanny faith in the goodness of man, but by the middle of their lives they confessed the frailty of humanity, and in the end, in complete disillusionment, they consigned man to a hell of hopelessness.

* * *

Verse 4 reveals He is life and light. He is creational and sustains life.

Verse 5 focuses on light (cf. II Cor. 4:6). This means spiritual darkness. ‘Shines’ is present tense, therefore it has shone and goes on shining. Darkness is the opponent. It is Satanic. But it did not overcome or understand Light. Light cannot be hidden.

In verses 7, 8 and 9, light is mentioned.

Verse 14 highlights glory, grace and truth. The Word which was always the ‘expression’ or communication of God in nature and providence has now entered the human scene as flesh. He comes to express the redemptive purposes of God, i.e. God in redemption. He was not just clothed with humanity, He was and is fully man.

‘Grace and truth’. The Son is full of these. Grace is God’s act in bringing to men through Christ, His revelation. This too, is truth. How exciting that God gives all to men through Christ. Grace is unmerited favour, and truth is that which is obscured by darkness and falseness. Jesus, the Word become flesh, does not just communicate truth—He is the truth (cf. 14:6, ‘I am the way, the truth and the life . . .’).

The fulness of His grace in verse 16 links with verse 17.

* * *

We do not minimize the fact that there are those with psychological and psychiatric problems that require professional help. But every day social workers, ministers and doctors meet people who are disillusioned, frustrated and conscience-stricken, and who are searching for definite answers. Looking for reality.

Some years ago psychiatrists invented a new term for what the Bible calls 'sin'. They called it 'a guilt complex'. But no matter what label is used, it is an issue we all grapple with. The pleasure-loving son, the immoral father, the proud daughter, the vain mother. All of those whose habits or attitudes have wrecked their lives and are inwardly ashamed of them-selves. So many people cringe under a sense of failure, dogged by guilt and discouraged by weakness, and yet what we have already looked at in John's Gospel should give us tremendous hope, for God came into this planet in His Son Jesus, so as to eradicate the main cause of these issues and to give us a new quality of life through His grace.

The earthly ministry of Jesus was punctuated with pronouncements of forgiveness. 'Be of good cheer . . . your sins are forgiven . . .'; 'Neither do I condemn you: go your way and sin no more . . .' These were life-changing words and when accepted and acted upon brought deliverance to those who were captives to sin. Light and life and glory have come to us as a result of God's grace, but we do not remain at the cradle at Christmas. We see them revealed against the background of the Cross and Resurrection.

We are not suggesting that Christians do not have problems or get themselves tied in knots, but we must acknowledge that many of these things happen because we want them to, and we enjoy running around in our dilemma. We culturalize and moralize and philosophize so much of God's total forgiveness

and grace in Christ, to the extent that we tie ourselves up with the wrappings and cannot receive the gifts.

One proof of this is in the area of boredom. It is incredible that a Christian can be bored, and yet some profess to fall into that situation. Modern living, with the increase of gadgets available through Bankcard, gives us machines to tone our muscles, milk our cows, count our money and X-ray our anatomy. We push buttons to light our homes, wash our clothes, beat the eggs, and provide entertainment. You do not even have to wash the car these days—just take it to the automatic car-wash! But with all the conveniences which we have manufactured, we still have not found the cure for boredom, and this problem is going to increase with higher income, less employment, less time at work, and a greater number addicted to the sedatives of drugs and alcohol to dull the pain of living.

A lady spoke to Billy Graham one day and said, 'I've been bored for ten years, but last Monday night I received Christ in your meeting and now I have purpose and meaning for life'.

To boredom we could add loneliness. But loneliness can become self-pity and something that we continue to revel in because it makes us the centre of attention. Loneliness can be real, but often it is just an excuse to withdraw into our insular world and grovel in our latest case of the sulks.

* * *

Again and again glory is revealed in the early life of Jesus (11:4). In 2:11, regarding the miracle at Cana, He manifested His glory. The sickness of Lazarus was for the glory of God and that the Son of God might be glorified. But pre-eminently glory is seen in the Cross. With Calvary as His immediate

prospect, Jesus said in John 12:23, 'The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified'. The idea that the death of Christ is supreme glory dominates this section of the Gospel. Even when Judas the traitor went out to do his foul business, Jesus could say in 13:31, 'Now is the Son of man glorified and God is glorified in him'. For the Apostle John, the thoughts of the lifting up of Jesus and His exultation and glory are all intertwined, but none of them is explicable except in terms of the Cross, because there and there only is true glory to be seen.

In his first chapter there is the link between glory and grace and truth (see vv. 14, 16 and 17). Surprisingly, 'grace' is used only four times in the entire Gospel, and it is in these verses, but the idea behind it is everywhere. That unmerited favour that God extends to man. But the moment we try and work our way to God or work our way for God, we exclude grace. Grace is the divine action to bring man salvation apart from anything man deserves. We must grasp the fact that the same is true in the Christian life. Having received salvation, we do not then try to earn it or impress God. It is grace upon grace, for He is the God of grace.

William Barclay writes, 'Jesus came to the Jews with a new view of life. They looked on glory as conquest, the acquisition of power, the right to rule. He looked on glory as a Cross. He taught men that only by death comes life, that only by spending life do we retain life. That only by service comes great-ness'. (*The Gospel of John*, [vol. 1]. The St. Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1956.)

Our response to verse 14 is in the thought of verses 10 to 12. In verse 10 the expression 'world' is used three times:

(a) The Light or the Word was 'in the world'. The word

conveys the thought of continuity. Not a fleeting visit.

(b) '*The world was made through him.*' Therefore the world owes its existence to the Word (cf. v. 3).

(c) '*The world did not recognize him.*' The first two occasions refer to the earth and everything in it, including man; but this third time where John says the world did not recognize Him, signifies men at large, but particularly those who came into contact with Jesus. The world, the cosmos, means an ornament. Our word cosmetic is derived from cosmos. The universe is the outstanding ornament of God's creation, but this world of men did not recognize or know Him. More than intellectual knowledge is meant, for the world failed to know and love Jesus as a friend. The world failed to be in right relation with Jesus and missed its great opportunity. The world's characteristic reaction is one of indifference.

John 1:11 teaches that Jesus came home, and is the same expression as the one used when John took Mary to his own home after being asked to by Jesus at the Cross. When the Living Word came to this world it was not as an alien. He came home. He came to Israel, God's own people. He came where He should have been recognized and accepted. But they received Him not. This 'receiving not' is a verb for intimate fellowship. It is used when Joseph took Mary as his wife, and of Christ taking believers to Himself in Heaven. The tense is aorist and points to a decisive act of rejection.

But there were those who did respond (v. 12). The three important words in this verse are:

- (a) '*Gave*'. The end of this story is not the tragedy of rejection but the grace of acceptance. There are those to whom He gave the gift that they might receive the Word and become His children.
- (b) '*The right*'. This is not power, it is status, authority, and is the same as used in 5:24.
- (c) '*Children*'. He uses children rather than sons because He is pointing to the community rather than to our rights and privileges.

Verse 13 emphasizes '*not of bloods*'. The plural expression is curious. There was an idea in ancient times that birth took place as the result of the action of blood. John is saying that the new birth is always a sheer miracle. There is no human initiative. Men are born of God; there is no other way.

The glory in verse 14 is linked with the shekinah, which means the dwelling of God among men. It reminds us of the Tabernacle in the wilderness, the place where God's glory would descend on the Holy of Holies. Here is the unique glory in that the Word becomes a human being.

Leon Morris reminds us that John makes 'Father' the characteristic word for God and uses the term more than twice as often as anyone else. The unique character of relationship between the Father and the Son is one of the great themes of this Gospel. As the story continues, it is no longer the Logos, nor just the historical name Jesus, but the more personal terms of Father and Son. The basis of this relationship is grace and truth. Not only is God the God of grace, but He is the God who demands truth and we have the truth when we have the Son and can therefore call God, 'Father' (cf. 14:6).

Rupert Brooke, the English poet, tells how he was sailing from Liverpool to New York, and everyone had friends to wave farewell, but he was overcome with the feeling of loneliness. He noticed a little boy on the dock, and rushing down the gangway said to him, 'What is your name?'—'William'—'Do you want to earn 6 pence, William?'—'Yes'—'Then wave to me when the boat goes.'

Rupert Brooke said that he never forgot that little urchin smiling and waving a dirty handkerchief, who took from him his loneliness.

A man tried to let himself down from the window-ledge of a building one dark night. Suddenly he was seized with a fear of falling a great distance and gripped the ledge frantically until his strength gave way and he fell to the ground, 18 inches beneath him.

We dread letting go so that we might receive grace and life and light and glory.

CHAPTER THREE

THE KING OF GLORY

JOHN 1:14–17

The Word which was always the expression of the Father has now entered the human scene with flesh. He comes to express God in redemption. He was not clothed with human form, He was and is fully and wholly man. The Word did not cease to be what He was before. He became through incarnation what He was not before, i.e. flesh. The Word remains the Word, but is now also a human being. He did not change into something else, for then God would have ceased to be God.

‘We have seen His glory.’ The dwelling of God among men reveals the glory—the Old Testament *shekinah*. John further explains this as the glory of the Only Begotten who came from the Father. John uses the word ‘Father’ to explain this relationship between God and the Word, as the relationship between Father and Son. The basis of this relationship is grace and truth. This means that He is the God of grace and the God who through grace demands truth. Therefore when we know the truth through knowing the Son, we can call God, ‘Father’, because we possess sonship. This brings us into community

rather than individualism.

What do we mean by glory? It signifies all the attributes of the Godhead as they shine forth, and can also mean the manifestation of any one of His attributes. His Glory means that radiance of infinite love that dwelt in Christ, and which broke forth again and again in His words and actions. It means His grace, mercy, compassion, wisdom, knowledge, against which all human cunning fails.

Isn’t it amazing that John says, **‘We have seen His glory’**? It does not mean to see with a glance of the eye, but that the eye and mind and total concentration of the faculties combine on the object, penetrate and absorb it. John and others with Him beheld the Divine Glory of the Son as it shone forth in His divine attributes. They realized that He was more than human flesh although His glory was demonstrated through His human flesh.

‘The only begotten from the Father.’ In some translations the word ‘Son’ is used but is not there in the original. John is saying that the Father and the Word extend back into all eternity, therefore their relationship on earth was not something new, but one which had been in existence before time (cf. Heb. 1:3).

‘The only begotten who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.’ ‘Full’ means that all that was in the Word and shone forth from Him was grace and truth. It means perfect completeness in every thought and action. These two attributes of grace and truth are essential for our salvation. He did not just possess grace and truth, He was grace and truth in His overflowing fulness. He does not communicate truth, He is the truth.

Grace means God’s undeserved favour toward us. The sin and guilt of our life is totally removed through the Cross.

There is a completely free pardon. (See verse 12.)

Truth is intertwined with grace: it means reality. Truth means the freedom to be truthful and real within the Father's authority. We do not need to be anything else than what He has made us through His grace and truth.

See verses 16 and 17: 'And from His fulness have we all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ'. Fulness consists of grace and truth (cf. Eph. 1:7f.).

Martin Luther has written concerning this nature of His fulness:

This spring is inexhaustible. It is full of grace and truth from God, it never loses anything, no matter how much we draw, but remains an infinite fountain of all grace and truth; the more you draw from it, the more abundantly it gives of the water that springs into eternal life. Just as the sun is not darkened by the whole world enjoying its light, and could light up ten worlds; just as 100,000 lights might be lit from one light and not detract from it; just as a learned man is able to make a thousand others learned and the more he gives the more he has—so is Christ, our Lord, an infinite source of grace, so that if the whole world would draw enough grace and truth from it to make the world all angels, yet it would not lose a drop; the fountain always runs over, full of grace.

'**Out of his fulness—we all received** (v. 16). We have nothing, Christ has inexhaustible abundance. He is the giver, we are the recipients. We receive in becoming Christians, so as to become Christians. We receive as Christians in constantly drawing on His fulness, otherwise we do not receive His grace and truth, and we replace it with a system of works. '... what have you that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?' (I Cor.

4:7). John answered, 'No one can receive anything except what is given him from heaven' (John 3:27).

'**Grace for grace**'. One blessing after another—the preposition 'for' means exchange. As the days pass, a new supply of grace takes the place of grace already given. Like one wave in the sea follows another, i.e. grace answers to grace; grace is exchanged for grace. It does not mean ordinary grace for special grace, but a constant flowing stream for every minute and hour. It is fresh, meaningful, rich, sufficient, and there is nothing we can do to earn it. We just receive His gift. Grace never runs dry, it is never in short supply, is never threatened by the problems of life. The doubling up of the word grace reveals what is meant by His fulness. This fulness of grace and truth has dealt with our sin and guilt at the Cross. There is nothing more that God can do. There is nothing more He needs to do. This fulness of grace and truth goes on dealing with every burden, sorrow, worry that we face as believers. It goes on dealing with it because it has already dealt with it. John cannot be any more clear than in writing 'grace in the place of grace'.

R. C. H. Lenski quotes a commentator named Schoener who writes:

Grace is a treasure to which none other can be compared. Carry together all the treasures of the earth, and altogether they will not balance what lies in the one word 'grace'. Grace is the blood-red mark which cancels the handwriting against us; a star of hope which sends its rays into this earth life darkened by sin; the ladder which leads us upward; the immovable pillar which shall stand, though hills and mountains pass away, and shall support the covenant of peace; the staff to which we can cling in our weakness; the guide who leads us safely through sorrow and death into the open portals of eternal blessedness.

Grace is the effective revealing of God's undeserved love towards sinful men, offering salvation only in Jesus Christ; making us right with God without any merit of our own; sanctifying and glorifying us.

'**The law**' (v. 17). The moral and ceremonial Law of Israel with its elaborate worship and numerous regulations. Israel was blessed by the Law, but there was no fulness to receive grace for grace. The Law was the preparation which revealed the will of a holy God and laid bare our sin and lostness. The Law contained sacrifice, but it had to constantly point forward to the perfect sacrifice of Christ. God gave the Law as a gift to Moses and to Israel. It was not a development of human progress, nor the result of religious evolution.

'**Through**' follows the passive verb 'was given', which means that Moses was God's instrument, not the initiator. Moses was not the Law as Christ is grace and truth. Moses was the Law's minister and servant, he was subject to it and he was blessed and taught by it. But Jesus Christ is grace and truth.

Again, '**grace and truth**'. Grace is proclaimed by truth and truth reveals grace. Both are received as gifts and are appropriated by us in our total daily lifestyle. The result is that grace always forgives and gives, and truth always reveals and assures both the forgiveness and the gifts.

We need to note that 'grace and truth came through Jesus Christ'. Grace and truth were not given like the Law through a modern Moses. Grace and truth came embodied in Jesus Christ; they came as He came. Therefore grace is the action of God and springs from His attitude and intention of love. I Peter 5:10 says (concerning encouragement after persecution), 'And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself

restore, establish and strengthen you'.

God did not tell us about grace and truth, nor did He give us grace and truth like He gave the Law. If He had done that He would have used a modern Moses like John the Baptist, and it would have been like the recycling of the old Law. No, Jesus Himself is grace and truth. His own person and work are the substance of grace and truth and holiness and forgiveness.

For the first time John mentions the name of the Word, Jesus Christ. Jesus is His name; Christ or Messiah is His office. 'For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich' (II Cor. 8:9).

But how do we receive God's grace and truth? Ephesians 2:4, 5 and 8 states, 'But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved . . . For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God'. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ acting as and for the Father who is the God of all grace, is now available for all men. To receive God's grace through the Cross means also to receive the gift of forgiveness for all sins. It means to receive eternal life which begins here and now in experience. It means to receive the Holy Spirit, the gift of love, the gift of acceptance. Therefore one knows the Father and the Son and the Spirit.

This receiving by grace is through faith which is itself a gift. We do not conjure up faith to respond; we do not decide when we feel like it to make a 'decision', for that is not biblical (see Rom. 3:23-24). The way we receive grace through the gift of faith is in repentance and repentance itself is a gift, just as everything else God does for us is His gift. There is nothing

that we can work up through emotion or decision or reaction; it is all of grace and therefore all God's gift to us. Man in his sin finds this very difficult to accept and becomes suspicious and even humiliated by having to receive it. Particularly is this true in Australian culture, because we see ourselves as self-sufficient. Unfortunately, even many Christians see themselves as embarrassed by living in grace, and therefore try to replace grace by works, which naturally destroys the whole understanding of living by grace. It is then that we need to acknowledge our extreme need in light of the suffering of the Cross and see that grace is never cheap, but always free because the enormous cost to give life has been paid. 'But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone' (Heb. 2:9).

We have said that grace is the action of God. When we are in grace and truth and therefore in Christ, we have eternal life and realize that God's action reveals His Kingdom. We are His sons, He is our Father, He is Lord, He is King, He is the King of glory. The Spirit of God reveals this within the community of His people. We must resist any understanding of being individualistic, but rather see that we belong to the total family of God.

Philip Teng writes,

'When the Christian life is devoid of fellowship it is substantially lacking in reality. A basic philosophy of the church is that it exists for a five-fold purpose: worship, teaching, service, witness and fellowship. He has brought us through grace into glory. We are His community, His people, and He is the King of glory.'

CHAPTER FOUR

MEETING JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THE SPIRIT

JOHN 1:19–34

John the Baptist is the first man with whom Jesus came in contact as He commenced His public ministry. In fact, there is no New Testament record of any words of Jesus from the age of twelve until He is face to face with this great man of God. John was a unique personality, rugged and severe, but also humble.

Luke tells us that he came from a godly home—his birth was through divine intervention—he was a spirit-filled man all his life—he prepared the way for Jesus—he went through doubt and testing and finally prison and was then beheaded for his loyalty to Jesus Christ.

John the Baptist worked under the strong sense that he was carrying out a divine commission. Verse 33 contains four words that undergird this concept. 'He who sent me' (cf. 1:6, 'There was a man sent from God').

Jesus Himself was sent by His Father (see 7:16; 9:4). I John 4:14 says, 'And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world'.

Why was there a John the Baptist? Verse 23 reveals that he is a voice for God, a channel through whom He could reach others. He had led a secluded life for many years and this was all the preparation for his ministry as the greatest of the prophets.

His humility is shown in the way he was always pointing people away from himself to Jesus (vv. 25–27).

Verses 30 and 34 show how John introduced Jesus to those nearby (cf. vv. 15–16. 'Fulness' = pleroma—the sum total of all that is in God. 'Grace upon grace', i.e. one wonder leading to another).

There are two aspects of John's message about Jesus that we emphasize.

(a) **He is the sin-bearer.** 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!' (vv. 29 and 36; cf. Acts 13:38–39). 'When I see the blood, I will pass over you' (Exod. 12:13). Christ is the Passover Lamb (I Peter 1:18–19). Geoffrey Bingham writes: 'Man is not a helpless victim of sin, i.e. man's drive to be autonomous, independent of God, and therefore not obedient to God. Man is at heart a rebel and initiates sin in his own life. But God initiates the Cross, holiness, love, forgiveness from sin and guilt'.

(b) He baptizes with the Holy Spirit. 'And John bore witness, "I saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him; but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and

re-main, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit' " " (vv. 32–33; cf. I Cor. 12:12–13). All Christians have the Holy Spirit, and this occurs at conversion, but many are testifying of a greater realization in their Christian development that occurs later on and can happen more than once. It is not a second blessing, but a fresh meeting with the Lord that can warm the heart to the greatness of who He is. The great saints like R. A. Torrey, Andrew Murray and D. L. Moody all experienced and taught crisis situations in which a greater knowledge of the Spirit's ministry was evident in their lives.

The real proof of such an event is not that we talk about it, but its evidence in our life through love, which means relationships with others. A commitment to the task that points to Jesus Christ. Too often we rationalize or dissect or sieve out what God is revealing to us. The fault is not in His declaration but in our clouded reception.

A few months after colour T.V. was introduced into a certain area, a viewer wrote a letter to his local station complaining that the pictures were still coming to him in black-and-white. He accused the management of deliberately misleading the public and demanded an apology. The T.V. officials explained to this disgruntled man as kindly as possible that the colour picture could not be picked up by his ordinary black-and-white set. The difficulty, they emphasized, was not in their transmission but in his receiver.

Verses 35–37 do not seem spectacular, but think of who these two men became—Andrew and John; and then verses 40–42 show that Andrew led his brother to the Lord. The inference also is that John found his brother James, and

introduced him to Jesus.

The rich harvest from the life of John the Baptist through his meeting with Jesus reaches out to Andrew, Peter, John and James, plus the multitudes who followed.

The Master seeks to meet us in life-changing confrontation. In opposition, the Enemy, as an angel of light, will seek to sidetrack us away from essentials and ensnare us even without our knowledge.

Recognize the enemy! I was reading the other day about the habits of ants, and apparently there are certain kinds of ants that have a passion for the sweet glandular substance given off by the caterpillar of a large blue butterfly. They can become so addicted to it that they even seek out the supplier and carry him to their nest with delight. But they unwittingly bring home an enemy in disguise, for the caterpillar gorges himself exclusively on ant larvae. Usually such a threat to the colony would be repelled with great vigour, but the adults enjoy the tasty secretions of their guest so much that they are oblivious of the fact that their young are being devoured in the process.

Our sensitivity to the ministry of the Spirit in our life can be dulled and compromised because we are so involved in apparently good things that are secretly destroying us.

CHAPTER FIVE

JESUS AND THE TEMPLE

JOHN 2:12–15

It is easy to overlook verse 12 and jump into the story of verse 13, but we do so to our own regret. Jesus has revealed His glory to a few of the disciples and the family in the sign given at Cana, and now He is to demonstrate a Messianic picture as He throws out the commercial profiteers in the Temple, which is His Father's House. In verse 12, Jesus is pictured as resting with family and friends before further ministry.

The Passover lasted seven days and every male Jew, twelve years and older, was supposed to attend this festival at Jerusalem, but there was no provision for the Gentile's Court to be filled with big business. It was an elaborate celebration reminding the Jews of the first Passover in Egypt that led to the Exodus. It occurred in March and continued at times until April. A male lamb in its first year without any blemish was taken and between three and six o'clock in the afternoon of the fourteenth day, it was killed. A prayer of thanksgiving by the head of the house and the drinking of the first cup of wine

was followed by the eating of bitter herbs, as a reminder of the bitter slavery in Egypt. They would sing the first part of the Hallel, Psalms 113, 114, and wash their hands. The lamb would be carved and eaten with unleavened bread. They would sing the last part of the Hallel in Psalms 115–118. Then the first day on which the lamb was killed was followed by the seven-day feast of unleavened bread.

Around the Temple were four courts. That of the priests surrounding the building; the men towards the east, the women, and further on and around these three was an extensive court of the Gentiles. The outer side consisted of magnificent colonnades. In the court of Gentiles with the heat of summer were flocks of sheep and oxen, while the drovers and pilgrims stood bartering and bargaining around them. There were wicker cages filled with doves and under the rows of Corinthian columns sat the rows of money-changers, their tables covered with piles of various small coins, which they wrangled in the most dishonest of trades, their greedy eyes twinkling with the lust of gain. This was the entrance court of the Most High. The court which was witness that the house would be a house of prayer for all nations was like a bustling bargain sale.

This public ministry of Jesus begins with holy wrath and indignation. He takes a scourge, for there were plenty of rope pieces left over from tying animals and cages, and He applies this to men and animals. Jesus never lost His self-control, because that would have been sin, but there is nothing soft and sweet about His action. This is His Father's house, but it has degenerated into a house of trade.

One question we need to look at is that John describes this scene at the beginning of our Lord's ministry, whereas the other gospels refer to a cleansing of the Temple at the last Passover. Commentators differ, but the obvious answer is that

there were two cleansings, some two years apart.

The Jews question Jesus in verse 18. He is acting in the capacity of a reformer. Little did they realize that His act in cleansing the Temple was a sign that fulfilled Malachi 3:1–3. The Messiah had entered the Temple which was His Father's House and was purging it as had been predicted. Their request for a sign was stupid and weak, and proved their unwillingness to admit their guilt. The authorities should have been ashamed of this craft and greed, and instead of asking Jesus what right He had to do this, they should have confessed their sins and thanked Him. How we wriggle when God acts in our lives and in our church fellowships!

The conversation continues in verses 19 and 20. 'Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up". The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?"'

In verses 14 and 15 the word 'temple' refers to the priestly edifice, but in 19–21, it is a different word and means the inner sanctuary. The consequence of Jesus' life will be the Cross. Israel's physical Temple or tabernacle was the place in which God dwelt. It was a picture of Christ's body, and if anyone destroys the body of Christ, he also pulls down the Temple of stone at Jerusalem. This is true for two reasons. When our Lord is crucified, the physical Temple and its entire system ceases to have any meaning, for when Jesus died, the veil of the Temple into the Holy of Holies was rent from top to bottom. Then the terrible crime of nailing Him to a criminal's cross results in the destruction of Jerusalem, for the Romans under Titus came in 70 A.D. and destroyed the city and Temple physically. But the raising again of Jesus through the power of the Father means that now He sends forth His Spirit, and the new temple like the new Israel, is the church. It is a sanctuary

made without hands. We are the church and we are the temple, and the word used is the inner sanctuary. Our body is the dwelling-place of God's Spirit, both when we are gathered together and when we are separated in our tasks during the week.

The Temple in Jerusalem was being built for some forty-six years and was still not complete. The Jews could only see the literal sanctuary. Their obsession with the building and the unbelief of their hearts meant that they could not see beyond what to them was obvious.

The Jewish Temple was originally built by Solomon and destroyed under Nebuchadnezzar in the attack that led to the exile in Babylon. It was rebuilt on the ruined site by Nehemiah and Ezra. It was not again destroyed until the Romans, but its inferior condition led to a gradual rebuilding from the foundations up on a more elaborate scale by Herod the King. It was also called Herod's Temple. The Jews could not see past their building (cf. 1:14).

In John 2:21, He refers to the temple of His body. To this day the Temple has not been rebuilt and the Mohammedan Dome of the Rock occupies the ancient Temple site. The disciples were in the background watching and listening, but until the day of our Lord's Resurrection they failed to see its meaning. No doubt this was due to their unwillingness to accept that Messiah would suffer and die, but after the Resurrection, the truth hit them like a blinding explosion (see John 2:23–25).

The account goes on in chapter 3 of John to introduce Nicodemus. Here was one man who not only carefully examined the credentials of Jesus, but a man whom Jesus was willing to trust in the struggle that he had towards believing faith (see 7:50–51 and 19:39). Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a

member of the Sanhedrin, a scribe, i.e. Rabbi, learned in Old Testament Scripture, and a teacher of Israel. He no doubt heard about the situation of the Temple or maybe witnessed it and came at night, with caution, for careful investigation.

Interestingly, Jesus speaks to him about the Kingdom. John 3:3 and 5 are the only times where John refers to the Kingdom of God, which means eternal life. The King and the coming of Messiah belong together, for He is the King and only where He is, is the Kingdom. The spiritual birth is some-thing one undergoes, not something we produce. Being a Jew gave Nicodemus no part in the Kingdom. Being a Pharisee and in the Sanhedrin and being a Rabbi in no way gave him entry into the Kingdom. Everything on which he built his hopes throughout a long life sank into ruin and became a little worthless heap of ashes. Unless he attains this mysterious new birth, he shall not see the Kingdom, i.e. have an experience of it.

Note Nicodemus's penetrating question in verse 4: 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?'. This is not unspiritual denseness. He wants further explanation and Jesus gives it to him. Nicodemus knew that Jesus was referring to more than physical birth, and he wanted clarification. In verse 5, Jesus teaches that John's baptism was for repentance, and also links in the fact of the Spirit: 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God'. It reminds us of what John the Baptist himself had announced; that he was to baptize with water, but Jesus would baptize with the Spirit. And that is the only way of entry into the Kingdom.

John 3:6 reveals that what is human can only produce that which is human. Nicodemus has to look beyond and above

human perspective. Just as a stream can never rise higher than its source, so man has to be lifted up to the reality of the Cross and accept God's holiness, grace, love and forgiveness, without any merit or effort on his own part.

CHAPTER SIX

WORSHIP AND THE FATHER

JOHN 4:16–26

We often take worship for granted, and we have generally lost the ability and desire to worship. Christians are happy to be involved in church work to a certain extent, and to run around and do things, but to actually take time for worship in its purest sense is frequently neglected. The strength of the church is the reality of its worship, for this involves us in deep spiritual relationship with the Triune God.

In the story of the woman at the well in John 4, the expression 'worship' occurs ten times (vv. 20–24), and twice it comes through that true worship is worshipping the Father in Spirit and truth.

Worship here is a different word from that in Romans 12:1. There it means intelligent service.

The Bible is extensive in its vocabulary of worship, but the essential meaning in both Old and New Testaments is 'service'. In the New Testament we find that Jesus participated in temple and synagogue worship, but He always taught that real worship is the love of the heart towards the Heavenly Father. His teaching means that the need to approach God through

ritual or priestly mediation is not only unimportant, but now unnecessary. Worship becomes true, for it is not just a service offered to God, but the service towards one another.

The New Testament is not clear on regular worship patterns. The day of worship was the Lord's day, but at the beginning of the church they met every day for fellowship. Worship was not conducted in church buildings but in the homes of believers. Simplicity was the keynote of these house-church gatherings, and they would consist mainly of praise, prayer, Scripture reading and teaching. The church at Corinth met in this way and included speaking in tongues, the love feast, followed by the Lord's Supper. But the main emphasis right through is on inner love and devotion of the heart to God.

The expression 'worship' in John 4 comes from two words—'towards' and 'kiss'. To make obeisance, to do reverence as an act of homage to God. It is also used to illustrate worship of man, of the dragon, the beast, the image of the beast, to demons and to idols. But the worship of God is not precisely defined in Scripture. There are other verbs that are used to describe worship and in broad terms it is regarded as the direct acknowledgement of God—His nature, attributes and claims—and includes the outgoing of our heart in praise and the thanksgiving or service done in acknowledging who He is.

The specific place of worship is shown to be secondary, but true worship itself is essential (v. 21). Mt. Gerizim is still sacred to the handful of Samaritans living today who maintain worship there. But all through the centuries the Temple site in Jerusalem has been in pagan and Mohammedan possession and the Jews cannot worship there. The place is secondary.

Worshipping '*in spirit and in truth*' (v. 23) means that our entire heart enters into what we are doing, and this is in full

harmony with the truth of God as revealed in His word. Such worship will be spiritual rather than physical, inward instead of outward. And it will be directed entirely to God as we understand Him through the revelation of the Cross. Spirit and truth are not two phrases, but one. Judaism generally speaking was a worship of the letter, not of the Spirit. The Samaritans worshipped falsehood, not truth. But through the coming of Jesus Christ, His life and death, we have immediate communion with God and worship in spirit is now possible. It is directed to Him and through Him and He declared that He was Truth. Therefore we can link this with spirit.

The Bible understands spirit as that part of a man's nature which is capable of making deep relationship with spiritual values. The spirit in man responds to the Spirit of God. The spirit of worship is that highest region where the human and the divine meet and not, as formally, something that was material and fleshly. The word 'truth' means that only through Christ and the ministry of the Holy Spirit can we have a true idea of God, which is obviously essential to a right service of Him. That is, we cannot serve the Lord in any capacity as He desires unless we first worship Him in spirit and truth. Our service flows from our worship and becomes an expression of heart-worship. We must remember that worship has nothing to do with externals like the number of hymns, singing and clapping in choruses, whether we sit or stand, meet in a circle, the time of gathering, or our manner of dress.

We are emphasizing verse 24 because God is Spirit. The original grammar of this has the subject 'God' last and preceded by the article. The predicate 'Spirit' is the first word of the sentence and is not preceded by the article. That is, the predicate Spirit is placed first for the sake of emphasis. It means 'completely spiritual in His essence, is God'. He is

not a tree or mountain deity that has to be worshipped on this or that specific mountain, whether it be Gerizim or anywhere else. God is independent and personal and genuine worshippers will not only worship the Father in spirit and in truth, but they must do so.

The remainder of the story, verses 27–42, is equally fascinating. The disciples were amazed that Jesus was talking with a woman, for Rabbis would never do this. The Rabbinical rule was, ‘Let no one talk with a woman in the street, no, not with his own wife’. The disciples were learning a lesson in the true emancipation of womanhood. Then in verse 28, she left her water jar, which is the same word as used in chapter 2 regarding the wedding at Cana.

Just as an aside, scholars differ as to why she left the jar. Some suggest that she was so filled with the new realization of who He was that she had no thought of physical water, nor the jar. Others suggest that the jar had been filled by her and she left it for Jesus to drink because He was thirsty. Yet the verse does not say she forgot the jar, but that she left it; and I feel that she purposely left it for Him to use, because this was an expression of her appreciation. Her first act of worship expressed in service. And in any case, it would leave her unencumbered for the journey to the city (vv. 29–30).

Jesus’ reply in verses 35–38 is often used in the missionary context, but do you see the scene? It was nowhere near harvest and the shoots were only just appearing above the ground; but there was a harvest of people streaming from that city, led by the woman. This is evangelism without pressure. It naturally occurs when people are filled with the water of Christ (see verses 39–42).

* * *

Worship is giving, not taking. Jesus worshipped every day by living as His Father’s Son.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WHERE IS YOUR FATHER?

JOHN 8:12–30

Have you ever flown a kite? Remember the difficulty with getting it airborne? But once it rises, the excitement begins as it zooms and dips and at times almost crashes back to the ground. It is an interesting parable of freedom. The kite is free to go as high as the string and the tail and the operator allow it, but without those restraints, it would not climb higher but crash to the ground. Freedom does not mean that we do what-ever we wish, but that we are responsible. The man who is not accountable is not free, he is not going anywhere. Real freedom is controlled through heart relationships.

John's Gospel reveals that while Jesus was free, it was a freedom conditioned by entire submission to His Father's will. The mystery of the Godhead demonstrates that the three Persons, the Father, Son and Spirit, are in a fixed relationship to each other. Jesus, the Son, appears not as an independent person doing His own thing, but as one who is dependent; who thinks and behaves completely in accordance with the Father's will.

Where is Your Father?

He acknowledges the Father's authority. Although He is co-equal with the Father and the Spirit in eternity, power and glory, His joy as the eternal Son in relation to the eternal Father is as the obedient Son. It was not an obedience in freedom that began on earth, but a continuation of an eternal relationship that had always existed.

1. HIS TESTIMONY (8:12–20)

Jesus' testimony about Himself and His freedom to obey His Father is introduced by His words as described in these verses.

(a) **Regarding Himself** (vv. 12–15). He said, 'I am the light of the world'. The Pharisees replied, 'Your testimony is not true'. In verse 14, Jesus states His testimony clearly.

(b) **Regarding the Father** (vv. 16–19). Verses 18 and 19 mean that the Pharisees knew neither Jesus nor His Father. They ask in mockery what Philip in 14:8 asks with earnest desire. 'Lord, show us the Father and we shall be satisfied'—'He who has seen me has seen the Father'. Jesus had made constant reference to 'Him who sent me' (John 5:23, 24, 30, 37, 38; 6:38, 39, 40, 44; 7:16, 18, 28, 33).

'**If you knew me, you would know my father also.**' In the Son, the Father reveals Himself. The Father is inaccessible unless we know Jesus, the Son. No one can see God but the Son has declared Him (cf. 1:18). The Pharisees prided themselves on their knowledge of God, but Jesus informs them that they have no knowledge of Him at all. What a smack in the eye!

(c) **To the Jews.** Verse 20 points out that Jesus was teaching in the Temple treasury.

2. HIS DECLARATION (8:21–30)

Jesus caused more consternation among the Jews by expanding His teaching of obedience to His Father.

(a) **Regarding the Jews.** Verses 21–24 describe their lack of understanding.

(b) **Regarding the Father** (vv. 25–27). In verse 25 they ask, ‘Who are you?’. Jesus does not justify Himself, but refers to what He has continually told them, and which they know; but they will not accept His authority.

In verse 25 they still do not understand His point.

Verse 26 shows that in every word of Jesus the mind of the Father is expressed. To reject Him is to reject the Father (cf. 5:29, 30, 37; 7:16).

In verse 27 they still do not understand because of blind prejudice.

(c) **Regarding Himself** (vv. 28–30). The Cross will reveal everything as in verse 28.

The absolute obedience of the Son as revealed in verse 29 shows that He is always doing what is pleasing to the Father. ‘He has not left me alone.’ The Father has not cast the Son away (cf. Matt. 27:46—‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’). It does not mean the Father rejects Him as a disobedient son, for that is totally impossible. In that reference to the Cross, the Son is forsaken in two aspects.

(a) Alone as a man, He bears the burden of God’s wrath

against sin, and as man, no one shares His punishment, not even the other members of the Godhead, although in all His suffering they are supportive.

(b) He experiences within Himself that indescribable torture, and because of taking our sin freely upon Him-self, there is a break in fellowship with God. Whilst there is no break in Christ’s communion with God, there is the loss of that communion he had always had with Him. And yet because He voluntarily accepts this death, the Father loves the Son all the more; if that is possible.

Verse 30 reveals that He is the victor, but this also raises other questions. Verses 30–38 is an uninterrupted story. Scholars differ as to whether those who believed were genuine believers as we understand it, or if there was something more beneath the word. I cannot see that those in verses 30 and 31 possessed genuine faith, because later verses clearly show they do not personally know the truth. Therefore the transition is not from one group to another group of people, but from one attitude to another attitude within the same group of people. That is, when Jesus teaches that mere mental acceptance is not enough, but that belief requires total surrender in response to the grace of God, then they become furious and discard their previous mental agreement with Him. In other words, it is not our belief that saves us, nor our commitment alone, nor our just saying ‘I’ve asked Jesus into my life’. All of those human responses are only possible because God’s love and grace issuing from His holiness reach out to us and He grants us the gift of faith to respond. Then and only then do we know the Father, because in depth, the Father knows us, through the

Son and the indwelling Spirit.

Verse 19, '**Where is your father?**'. In a real sense it is no use telling them where the Father is until they know who the Father is (cf. John 14:6–8 and 11).

Right through this discourse the Pharisees are seeking to dodge the main issue by raising minor issues that are irrelevant. The main issue is, does God testify, as Jesus says, or does He not? In 5:36ff. the testimony was presented, but these men brazenly set it aside and take on the irrelevant issues that tickle their ability to talk, but never get to the vital areas of discussion.

Anyone who asks where the Father is, and wants Him produced for the witness stand, is revealing that they do not know Him at all, so no wonder they do not know or recognize the One whom the Father has sent. Those who reject the testimony that is given know neither the Father nor the Son, and the guilt of such ignorance is on their own heads.

It is interesting how Jesus answered this question in verse 19: '*You neither know me nor my Father; if you knew me you would know my Father also*'. If Jesus had placed the Father first in His answer, He would have pointed to the Old Testament as the basis of knowledge. Now the Old Testament does show us the Father, and also reveals the Son; but by referring to Himself first, Jesus teaches that He is the medium for knowing the Father. The Father does speak in the Old Testament, but He speaks more clearly in the New Testament through His Son, and in fact acts through His Son (Heb. 1:1–2). This means that in knowing the Son and only through knowing Him can we know the Father.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WHO IS YOUR FATHER?**JOHN 8:31–58**

The story progresses and verse 30ff. depicts not two groups, but one which believes and the other which does not! There are those in this group who profess belief and then deny their understanding of belief and of Jesus, as the conversation continues.

1. WHAT IS FREEDOM ? (vv. 31–38)

The word for 'believe' in verse 30 is a strong expression and a (much) weaker word is used in verse 31, for the collapse of faith is soon to come. It was only a momentary belief and the Jews very quickly went on the defensive when the implications of such belief and freedom became known to them.

Verse 32 introduces freedom through knowing the truth, but can they handle such freedom? Again, freedom can be very threatening because it means freedom in the context of authority. Unless they know the truth and the resulting freedom

and authority in grace, they can never appreciate His teaching.

Their immediate reaction in verse 33 is to deny that they have ever been anything but free. They have quickly forgotten Jewish history with years of bondage in Egypt, oppressions in the times of the Judges, captivity in Babylon and the present control under Rome.

Such dull mental attitude is underlined by Dr. Alfred Plummer: 'The power which the human mind possesses of keeping inconvenient facts out of sight is very considerable'.

Jesus continues in verse 34 and explains that everyone who continues to commit sin is the slave of sin, therefore to continue in sin is the opposite of doing the truth. In verse 36 he continues to present the concept of freedom through knowing the Son. They are the natural descendants of Abraham, but not children of Abraham's faith in any real sense, therefore the word of Jesus has no place in them. They have stifled it and cast it out and morally they are children of the devil.

You can see how their belief in verses 30 and 31 was simply a moralistic acceptance but not the freedom of grace. Jesus had stated clearly, 'If you continue in my word you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free'. Discipleship and obedience must be understood in the context of truth and freedom.

Obedience as His disciples is the glad response to God's grace, never the condition, i.e. legalism declares that God will accept us as His children because we obey, but the good news of Jesus Christ informs us that God has received us as His children through the Cross, with all our shortcomings. Therefore His grace enables us to obey. We must grasp that truth firmly, otherwise we will react as the Jews did.

To be in God's grace is to be in His obedience. To be free

in Christ means to be whole people and joyful because we are under the Father's authority. Those who refuse authority are simply stating that they do not know the Father.

Obedience is not a condition of being loved. The gift of God's love puts us into a trustful and obedient subordination to the One who loves us.

Jesus Christ lived, died and rose in obedience to the love of His Father and as we freely abide in such obedience, our joy is complete and ecstatic and overflowing. Our motive for living in His freedom is not fear of failure or punishment or the keeping of some man-made standard, but free and willing response of gratitude for grace.

To turn freedom and authority and discipleship into legal requirements or the heavy obedience of making commitment, or measuring up to other people's demands, is to impose an impossible load of guilt. In fact, some people enjoy being guilty because it apparently motivates them to greater efforts of serving God, but it is not Christian and ultimately leads to failure and condemnation because it is built on works.

This is a widespread attitude, and Geoffrey Bingham has said: 'Some people are guilty if they don't feel guilty'. By contrast, isn't Romans 8:1-4 liberating and exciting?

Those who live in the truth and are free are not absolved from the obligation to obey, but joyfully fulfil the works of God by obedience, because as Philippians 2:13 states, 'It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose'.

2. WHO IS YOUR FATHER? (vv. 39-47)

Two fathers appear in this section, the Father of Jesus and the fact that Satan is their father. The Jews introduce the point that

Abraham is their father, but they are inclined to wriggle out of the situation. Their very desire to kill Jesus comes from Satan (vv. 39 and 40). In verse 42 Jesus again states that He has been commissioned by the real Father. You see, if they were God's children they would love His Son. Jesus did not come of His own self-determination, but the Father sent Him.

The expression 'for' in verse 42 is very important. It signifies incarnation and mission. Jesus was sent by God.

Verses 43–46 reveal that they do not hear or understand what He is saying because they are carrying out the desires of their father who is Satan. Their real father is incapable of truth and they reflect his murderous intents. They cannot believe Jesus because He is the truth and tells the truth (v. 45).

Verse 46 is a good question and verse 47 is a logical conclusion to that question.

Who is your Father? Remember these Jews were religious and knew a good deal about their faith. They claimed to be the children of Abraham, but Jesus hits them hard with the fact that they do not understand what it means to be Abraham's children, and therefore there is only one alternative. They are the children of the devil.

3. WHO ARE YOU? (vv. 48–58)

Verse 53, cf. verse 25. In verse 48 'we' is emphatic. We are right, and they sneer because He has visited Samaria. They accuse Him of being demented because He does not agree with their viewpoints. But Jesus is not concerned about the Samaritan charge, He simply states in verse 49, 'I honour my Father and you dishonour me'. In verses 52 and 53 we see their continued blindness, for they cannot discern spiritual truth. They exaggerate their language and think that He is referring to

physical death.

Jesus points out three areas of teaching. In verses 49–53, that He is greater than Abraham because the Father grants Him glory. He continues this in verses 54–56 by referring to the vision of Abraham. But their blindness continues, as in verses 57–59 He explains that He is the predecessor of Abraham.

Our danger in responding to this word is to immediately claim that God is our Father and therefore try and live a more committed life. But you cannot be any more committed than committed, and as we stated earlier, it is not our commitment in any case; it is His grace. Therefore, although ethics have their rightful place, we miss the point if we try to conform ourselves to some ethical pattern or moral behaviour or legal expectation. Many of us have been taught that we need to apply Christian principles to everyday life, and this is seen as the whole substance of sanctification. Therefore we imagine we are obedient. But Jesus' obedience was not like that.

All the time, as He taught right through this chapter, He was seeking to understand at any particular moment what His Father was actually doing so that He could eagerly respond to that relationship that existed between them, i.e. everything depended not on His awareness or ability to apply moral principles, but upon His sensitivity that came because of His heart relationship with His Father. Jesus did not live by programmes or principles, but by understanding what His Father was doing.

We at times use the words 'principles, programmes and goals', and they have a rightful place; but let us never imagine that those patterns are the full description of carrying out our Father's desire.

We live in a world where business and behavioural patterns are pushed on us, where corruptness is justified and the means

of obtaining something is seen as acceptable. If we respond to this by building into some deeper commitment or greater dedication, we miss the whole point.

We are perfectly free because we are perfectly forgiven, and the Spirit of God within us is the motivation for living as the Father's children. Any attempt to psych ourselves up to do better or perform at greater intensity, goes away from grace and becomes involved in works. Therefore it is not Christian but Pharisaic.

So, who is your Father? Who are you? We know the answer to such questions through the life-changing impact of the Cross and Resurrection: 'Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free' (v. 32).

As a Monk in the Church of Rome, Martin Luther had one consuming passion, to be right with God. He ran the whole length and breadth of the Roman Catholic penitential system, performed every good work, engaged in every discipline, scourged his body, examined his soul, but nothing could bridge the gulf between his sinfulness and God's holiness. His frustration and despair issued in a physical illness that brought him to the brink of death. In agony he moaned, 'Oh, my sins, my sins'. Finally it dawned on him that it is not by self-effort that a man makes himself right with God. He finds salvation not by doing something, but by accepting in grace through faith what Christ has done. The good news of Jesus Christ calls on us not to achieve, but to receive. (Rom. 1:17: 'For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith"'.)

CHAPTER NINE

EXAMPLE AND BETRAYAL**JOHN 13:1–11**

In his book entitled *Life Looks Up*, the author, Charles Templeton, states that the history of the world has been altered by events which occurred in two small rooms separated by thousands of miles and thousands of years.

The first of these rooms was a drab flat over a dingy laundry somewhere in the Soho district of London. He describes the filthy, curtainless window giving access to a room with a small round table piled with a conglomeration of articles—a heap of tattered manuscripts—a pipe with scattered ashes—a tea cup with a broken handle—a child's toy—some odds and ends from a woman's work basket.

At the table is a man writing with passionate intensity. The pathetic light above his head etches deeper the dark harsh lines of his face. His fierce jutting eyebrows and black bushy beard create a fearsome appearance.

He writes late into the night and the only sound is the

scratching of a cheap pen. His name is Karl Marx and the volume he pens is *Das Kapital*, which has changed the history of nations, and in the belief of modern communists, will revolutionize the world.

The second of these rooms could once be found in that ancient city of the world, Jerusalem. There too, was a table of completely different design, laid with bread and wine. Gathered around are thirteen men. One of them performs the customary breaking of bread and sharing of wine, and then speaks to the others concerning impending events which have charged the room's atmosphere with gloom. His name is Jesus and His words and actions have changed the lives of millions of people, and Christians believe that His Gospel of love, not the Marxist doctrine of revolution, will ultimately build the only kingdom that satisfies the heart of man.

The Upper Room was the scene of our Lord's final meeting with His disciples the night before His crucifixion. On the Thursday morning, the Day of Unleavened Bread, Jesus instructed two of His followers to enter Jerusalem and prepare a place where they might celebrate the Passover (Mark 14:12ff.; Luke 22:7ff.). Mark and Luke have the interesting aspect that they were to follow a man bearing a pitcher of water. This was a pre-arranged signal, because only women normally carried water pitchers and the sight of a man doing this would be unusual.

As the meal progressed, Jesus exploded a bomb-shell among them. He predicted that in the face of intrigue and approaching violence, one of those sitting with them was a traitor. None of the disciples protested, but each looked into the depth of his own life, realized his own capacity for be-trayal, and blurted out the response, 'Surely You don't mean me'.

1. JESUS WASHES HIS DISCIPLES' FEET (vv. 1-20)

Verse 1 introduces a new section, for the actions and signs of Jesus' ministry are completed. It is now Thursday evening and the scene of the Jewish Passover meal. It was the custom for slaves to wash the feet of the guests before they sat down to eat. Part of the house furniture in those days was a large copper basin. There was no slave present and one of the disciples should have exercised this privilege, but they were all too conscious of their so-called position and social standing. Jesus Himself demonstrates the meaning of servant-hood.

The washing does not only show humility (v. 7). The word 'doing' is more than this particular act; it refers to all that happens, including His Death and Resurrection. Peter cannot wash himself (v. 8). Only Christ can wash him. Therefore the washing points to death, and only through death comes cleansing and life. Jesus serves and gives Himself, and demonstrates that they can do no less.

When John the Baptist wanted to give expression to his feeling of unworthiness in comparison to Jesus, he used the picture of being unworthy to kneel down in front of Him and unloosen His sandal straps. The disciples on the other hand were more concerned with who among them was the greatest. The fact that greatness is measured by love and service had not registered with them.

Jesus even washed the feet of Judas. Jesus is pictured as an oriental slave wearing nothing but a loin-cloth. His flowing outer garment, His tunic and His belt had been laid aside. The long linen cloth was tied around His middle, and with its end He would dry their feet. Mark the contrast between verses 2 and 3. Our Lord performed this act in full consciousness that He was God's only begotten Son and the rightful heir of all things.

While the rest of the disciples were left in their perplexity and shame, Peter's impulsive nature was verbalized. He was a man who could not keep still and always thought aloud. In verse 6 the contrast between 'you' and 'my' is strong in its grammar. Peter was absolutely shocked. Jesus realized that this was only a part of the whole story, whereas Peter was covering his embarrassment at what he thought may be an isolated incident.

In verse 8 Jesus wants Peter to realize that washing his feet is only a part of total cleansing from sin and unless this takes place he has no share in the Cross. In verse 9 he turns from one extreme to the other, for Jesus was not stressing the physical. Peter is a wonderful picture of most of us. A man who frequently loses his balance. At one minute he is walking courageously on the water, the next minute he is crying out for help. At one time he makes a glorious declaration, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God', and scarcely have his words concluded when he rebukes the Christ whom he has confessed. Later in this chapter he promises to lay down his life for Jesus, but a few hours later his words sound out again and again, 'I am not His disciple'.

We often see our lives revealed in Peter, and isn't it wonderful that Jesus understands and is so patient with our lack of stability and balance and maturity.

Is Jesus suggesting we should practise foot washing? No, He does not command the disciples to do that, but He does give them an example which they may carry out.

During a W.C.C. conference in India, an Indian delegate landed at the station with eleven pieces of luggage. Some laymen from the local Churches were doing voluntary taxi service and this delegate, being of high birth and not realizing the situation, stood

by while a white-haired gentleman carried all his luggage to the car. It turned out that the chauffeur was really the generous benefactor who had given two million dollars with which to build McGaw Auditorium for the plenary sessions of the Council. Jesus said, 'I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you'. He portrays the power of example.

2. JESUS PREDICTS HIS BETRAYAL (vv. 21–30)

This seems to be Satan's hour, for he is active in the life of Judas. Imagine them in something of a circle, reclining on their left arms and eating with their right. John was on Jesus' right. Who was on His left? Many suggest it was Judas (vv. 23–25).

Verse 26. The sop or morsel, i.e. a piece broken off by the host. A mark of goodwill. He gives this traitor a token of affection before dismissing him. The sop does not cause this decision for evil; it crystallizes it. Judas is now cut off from the disciples by his exposure as traitor.

In verse 2 Satan made the suggestions to Judas and Judas listened. Now in verse 27 Satan takes full possession of him.

Verse 30 states, '**It was night**'. Jesus is the light of the world, and darkness in John's Gospel invariably means moral darkness. Judas went from the only source of light into the darkness where there is no light (cf. Cain went from the presence of the Lord—Gen. 4:16: 'So Cain went out from the Lord's presence and lived in the land of Nod', i.e. [Wandering]).

CHAPTER TEN

GLORY AND LOVE**JOHN 13:31–38**

Some years ago, Decision Magazine contained an editorial entitled, ‘To everybody with love’. It said in part:

Apologies are always hard, and sometimes for Christians they are doubly hard. But this one has to be made; we of the evangelical community have not loved everybody as we should have done.

We have placed emphasis on sound doctrine and rightly, for there is no compromise between truth and error; but we have not always proclaimed that truth in a loving manner. We have warned about judgement, we have talked about hell, etc.

The editorial continues in this fashion with the emphasis that Jesus is the key to love. It is important that we not only hear what He says, but how He says it.

1. GLORY AND DEPARTURE (vv. 31–33)

Jesus is aware of betrayal, but now recognizes glory. Death is inevitable, but also Resurrection. These men are His chosen children and He loves them as He declares in verse 34.

Jesus is free of the oppressive presence of Judas and now bursts forth to declare that the glorification of the Son of man has begun. His Kingdom will declare the rule of love. ‘Son of man’ is used for the last time in the Gospel.

The glory of the Father is intimately connected with the glory of the Son. The two are in the essential purpose of saving mankind through the Cross and Resurrection.

Leon Morris writes: ‘The Glory of Christ as He stoops to save mankind is the glory of the Father whose will He is doing. The Cross shows us the heart of God as well as that of Christ!’.

The word ‘**glory**’ in the Old Testament means the revelation of God’s being, nature and presence to mankind. An illustration is the cloud that led the children of Israel from Egypt through the wilderness. In the New Testament the word basically refers to the revelation of the character and presence of God in the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

The expression ‘has been glorified’ means action that has just happened, with effects that reach into the present. By means of His obedience and love, Jesus as the Son of man was glorified. He knew the storm was about to break, but rather than avoid it, He is walking into it. In the act of dismissing Judas, He reflects glory on Himself, for He allows the storm, not just of some rain but of wrath, to descend upon Himself, and in doing that He shelters His own. This was His glory. At this moment of treachery which seems to spell defeat and disaster, the Son of man is actually glorified. And God is glorified in Him, for the two are inseparable.

William Hendriksen says:

Whenever we think of Christ’s suffering, we never know what to admire most: whether it be the voluntary self-surrender of the Son to such a death for such people, or the willingness of

the Father to give up such a Son to such a death for such people.

In verse 32 He refers to the heavenly glory which He had with the Father before the world was created. The tense is future. The glory of completing the work of redemption has already begun. This means He departs to the Father as the Son of man and returns to the Father as the Son of God. This will immediately follow. The glory of Christ is one and includes the betrayal, the Cross, Resurrection and Ascension. In simple terms it means that the Son's glory reflects glory on the Father, and the Father's glory reflects glory on the Son.

In verse 33 Jesus says, 'Little children'. Nowhere else in the Gospels does Jesus use this expression of tender affection for those who are still immature. It springs from the thought of His orphaned disciples. John never forgot this tender concern for he uses it frequently in his first letter. Jesus is assuring them of His sympathetic understanding in the fact of going from them.

In verse 33, 'So now'. There are two expressions for this word. One means to mark a point of time; the other used here marks a point of time relating to the past and future and signifies development or progress (e.g. 9:19 and 25). 9:21 means the former—a point of time. The use of 'so now' signifies that in the events of the divine plan, the time had arrived for the disciples to realize that they must be left behind by Jesus.

2. LOVE AND DISCIPLES (VV. 34 AND 35)

The time of separation was to be a period of spiritual growth, therefore the commandment of love was geared to help the disciples appropriate the lessons of His life and realize the

character development that could result. The commandment to love was not new. Leviticus 19:17 and 18 was part of the Mosaic Law, but the motive of love was new. To love one another as He has loved us. It signifies a mutual affection and it is important to see these verses in the context of the whole story and not to pull them out and wave them like some flag of exhortation.

There are two Greek words for 'new'. One looks forward as 'young' opposed to 'aged', and the other looks back as 'fresh' opposed to 'worn out'. The latter is used here and in 19:41. It is a fresh commandment and means not love to all men, but love within the brotherhood. When His visible presence leaves them, they still have each other and are to demonstrate love to one another. He is pointing out that the true illustration of the church is not miracles or numbers or activity or exercise of gifts; but love.

It has been said that talent develops in solitude while character is made in the strain of life. The character of loving is made stronger by every association we have with one another.

Verse 35 now becomes more clear. The Apostle John died at extreme old age and some of his story was written down by Jerome. When John's younger followers carried their old teacher into the assemblies, he frequently repeated the expression, 'Little children, love one another'. Asked why he kept repeating that all the time, he replied, 'Because it is the Lord's command and if it only be fulfilled it is enough'. Where this love for each other exists it has to show itself, and although not ostentatious, others will realize its presence. Obviously where there is no love there is no discipleship.

Therefore, Jesus could say *'All men will recognize that you are my disciples and that you belong to me and no one else'*.

The Master is not stressing a moralistic burden of behaviour nor some high ideal for which they may struggle. The fresh commandment as He has loved them, and therefore their love for one another comes forth as a natural necessity. Where there is the divine love of the Father in the community of believers, it surges outside to those for whom Jesus also died.

3. PETER AND DENIAL (vv. 36–38)

All the Gospels tell us that Jesus prophesied Peter's three-time denial. It made an impression on the early church (v. 36). Simon Peter's full name is used, for Peter is still linked to his own wave length. He does not hear what Jesus is saying about love and ignores His words, for he reverts to the subject of Jesus' departure. But Jesus does not give Peter a full reply.

Verse 37 shows that Peter's pride is hurt and he defends his position. He affirms his readiness to die for Jesus, but the opposite eventuates. Peter was far from ready to die and did deny Him, whereas Jesus willingly laid down His life for Peter.

Certainly Peter used his sword in the Garden to boldly face death, but he was not prepared to stand alone with courage when later asked whether he belonged to the Master. The seriousness of these words are underlined with, 'Truly, truly', signifying a solemn pronouncement. Such a prediction shocked and subdued Peter.

Peter's later willingness to accept the Lord's restoration and submit to His call in ministry is encouraging to us. The lessons from Jesus were hard, but Peter recognized that he needed to leave his pedestal of pride and obey his Lord. Only then was Peter released to know glory and love in service.

There is an old story of a prince travelling through France visiting the Prison of Toulon. Because of his nobility he

received permission to release one of the condemned men. He went from one cell to another and enquired why they were there. All declared their innocence stating they had suffered injustice, false accusation and oppression. Finally one man said, 'My Lord, much as I long to be free, I am guilty. I have committed many crimes and have nothing to say except that I deserve to be here'.

The Prince listened intently to the prisoner's words, then said in a voice that could be heard by all the others, 'You despicable wretch, what a pity that you should be amongst so many honest men. By your own confession you are bad enough to corrupt them all, you shall not remain with them another day'. Turning to the Officer he stated, 'This is the man, release him at once'. With keen insight the Prince knew that all the prisoners were guilty, but the one who acknowledged it and was truly sorry would receive mercy and be granted freedom.

The only people who qualify for salvation are those who recognize their need of God's grace. Jesus said, 'I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance'. Jesus died for all, but we need to admit our lost condition and claim the forgiveness that He offers to us.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

**THE GOODNESS OF
THE FATHER**

JOHN 14:8–27

There is an old Hebrew legend that tells of a Rabbi travelling on a mule through wild country. His only companion was a rooster whose shrill crowing at sunrise awoke him for devotions. He came to a small town at nightfall and sought shelter, but the inhabitants turned him away. Outside the village he discovered a cave in which to sleep. He lit his lamp before going to bed but a gust of wind blew out the light. During the night a wolf killed his rooster and a lion devoured his mule. Early in the morning he went to the town to see if he could buy some food. To his surprise no one was alive. A band of robbers during the night had plundered the settlement and killed all the inhabitants.

‘Now I understand my troubles’, said the Rabbi. ‘If the townspeople had received me I would now be dead. Had not my rooster and mule been killed, their noise or the light of my lamp would have revealed my hiding place. God has been good to me’. We can always trust the Lord’s wise leading. We may

not fully understand it now, but we shall know in the future.

The disciples did not understand why Jesus had to leave them. In chapter 14 of John’s Gospel, He is seeking to prepare them, not only for His departure, but for the coming of His Holy Spirit. This conversation probably took place in the Upper Room.

Verses 1–14 is a necessary prelude to the section concerning Jesus promising the Spirit in verses 16 and 17. The expression, ‘**Father**’, is used twenty-three times in the chapter, a significant emphasis. Jesus is continuing His instruction with the emphasis that God is Father, and in the light of the Cross which He is said to embrace, we realize that He is ‘Holy Father’, for it is His holiness of Fatherhood that is the source of our redemption and sonship. The New Testament name and idea of God is not simply ‘our Father’, but ‘The God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ’. Therefore the Cross reveals not simply the love of God, but the holy love of God. The power of the Cross is holiness; that is why believers are holy, because He has made us holy through the Cross.

The first concern of Jesus Christ in revealing God’s truth was not simply the forgiving love of God, but the holiness of God’s love. Therefore the holy love of God makes it possible for God to forgive. So to be a Christian means that the Christian faith is our life-experience of complete forgiveness because Jesus Christ has paid the total cost. It does not include forgiveness, it is forgiveness.

P.T. Forsyth: ‘You can go behind love to holiness, but behind holiness you cannot go, it is the true consuming fire’ (God The Holy Father. St. Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1957).

How do we hear these words from verse 15? As a threat or as the encouragement of belief? The build-up must be seen from verse 10. Every time Jesus speaks, it is the Father who

speaks through Him. Not that Jesus is some divine record or puppet, but their oneness and identity is a oneness of unity. Jesus is different to the prophets for they had to say, 'Thus saith the Lord', showing that God used them as His instruments and messengers. With Jesus it is opposite. When He opens His mouth He speaks every word and utterance, which is also the word and utterance of the Father. The two speak as one because they are One. Jesus in the Father and the Father in Him.

'Believe' is used in verse 11, but this time it is plural, whereas in verse 10 it was singular. It is a present active imperative. Keep on believing, for Jesus turns from Philip to the eleven. It is the same word as in verse 1. 'Go on believing' means that I am speaking the truth regarding this oneness with the Father (cf. John 10:38 where the order is reversed).

Then verse 12. In verse 11 the believing refers to believing what Jesus says, but here it means believing in the person of Jesus as the way, truth and life, as One who is in essence with the Father. The 'greater works' referred to means the extent of carrying the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

The 'greater works' result from Pentecost and were to initiate victory over Judaism and paganism. Our Lord's work was confined to Palestine with little apparent success.

Verse 13 has often been pulled out of context and hung up like some divine coat-hanger, but it must be seen in its setting here. Linked with verse 14, where we see that the emphasis is not on what the disciple shall ask, but now on the person who answers. In verse 13 the disciples are taught to direct their requests to the Father, but in verse 14 they will also direct them to Jesus. In addition, verse 14 adds in its grammar, 'I myself will do it'. That is not the stress of the previous verse. To underline 'I myself' does not mean that if the Father does

not do it, then I will. It is rather pointing to Jesus in order to give comfort to the eleven, because their world is collapsing around them as they realize He is going to leave. He is teaching that when He is gone they will still have Him in heaven as the One who will Himself do for them what they ask, whether their requests are to the Father or to Him. Therefore, the way we hear verse 15 is now significant.

He is speaking to believers and naturally expects their love. The word is agape which is the love of intelligent comprehension and devotion. It is not filial love. The belief they have in Him naturally results in love, but He also wants the disciples to question themselves whether it is being demonstrated as it should. The tense is 'are loving', it is a constant situation, not an on and off flashing of a neon light.

Then note verses 16 to 19 of this 14th chapter. We must never think that Jesus is teaching that the only way to receive the Spirit is the heavy obedience of keeping His commandments. It is not a conditional emphasis. Verse 15 describes the disciples as truly in love with their Lord, and verse 16 naturally follows to show His gift of the Spirit to them. When someone you love is going, there is that natural wrench, and so Jesus, who is going from them, explains that they are not to be left as orphans having to fend for themselves as best they can. The One who will come is the same as Himself, the Paraclete. In fact, the Father and the Son come as the Spirit comes, and will dwell with them.

'Paraclete' means one who is summoned to the side of another to aid him in legal defence. It is passive voice, not active, i.e. one who is summoned to plead a cause, not one who exhorts or comforts. Therefore the old word 'Comforter' can give an incorrect understanding. It has the idea of pleading and convincing and instructing as a legal friend.

Verse 17 describes this Advocate as the Spirit of Truth, and in verse 26 John illustrates that His ministry is to teach.

All the verbs in verse 17 are present tense and timeless, and isn't this encouraging? The exception is the last one 'and will be in you', which is future, but it does not alter the thrill of the whole concept. The Spirit was already in the disciples although not in the fulness of Pentecost.

The message for us is that each believer has the Holy Spirit within, but we need to experience through relationships what He can do within us. We are not talking about having some experience except the experience of the Spirit, and we cannot dictate just what God will do within us and through us in that regard.

Perhaps you heard Principal G. H. Morling on this passage and remember that in verses 16 and 17 he emphasized the Greek prepositions:

- (a) The Advocate is with us for fellowship.
- (b) He abides by our side to defend us.
- (c) He is in us as the source of power to each individual.

Verse 18 means 'I am coming to you in the Holy Spirit whom I send'. This was to be all realized at Pentecost.

Isn't verse 20 a significant encouragement? Therefore verse 27 is also very significant and real as we face another week of work, pressure and the difficulty of coping with the unexpected as well as what we expect. These words indicate that such peace is objective. It is the situation of peace when nothing disturbs our relationship with the Father. His peace is the peace that He establishes for us. It is not something which we manufacture. The subjective feelings of peace may come in time, but let us hold firmly on to the objective fact

that we have His peace. You see, even though Jesus is to leave them, His peace remains. And even though they deny Him in the turmoil of the Cross, the promise of His peace has been given to them. Of course, it is to be fully realized in the fact that on the Cross He made peace between them and God. So peace is not a word but the relationship of a gift granted to us.

Our response to what He has said to us is vital. You see, it is so easy for us to turn from the clear message of the Father's holiness and love and be all caught up in the fact of what it cost Him. Please realize that God never mars His grace by reminding us of the cost. Jesus never used spiritual blackmail to dangle in front of His followers, the fact of cost to Himself or the Father. In fact, Jesus never spoke about sin except in connection with its forgiveness. Therefore, the condition of forgiveness is not a grovelling in the dust, nor a trying to grapple with some aspect of physical suffering or emotional spiritual blackmail if I do not obey. The condition of forgiveness is as God's Spirit touches my life and reveals the emptiness within, I gladly answer His grace with the gift of His faith in a humble, joyful and even a struggling heart. It is accepting the freedom of the Cross. We do not have to count the cost, it is all finished. It is taking God at His Word, for Jesus Christ came not to say something so much as to do something. His revelation was action more than instruction. He did not come to declare forgiveness or explain forgiveness, or just to give forgiveness, but to be forgiveness. To be to us what we could never be, and as He comes to us we are for-given.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE HOLY SPIRIT AT WORK

JOHN 16:5–33

Some years ago we visited Griffith, N.S.W. Much of that country is the Murrumbidgee irrigation area. You can stand on top of a hill and on the one hand see the dry, dusty earth, sun-baked and hard, and then a few yards away where the canals have been dug, the freshness of the rice farms, the fruit growing, for the water has brought life and growth. In a similar way, we can see the difference between a life that has been touched and filled with the Holy Spirit of God and another life which may even be religious, but does not possess the fresh-ness of the Spirit.

John 16 can be divided into three sections:

vv. 1–11—The Holy Spirit and the world.

vv. 12–15—The Holy Spirit and the disciples.

vv. 16–33—The presence of the Father.

The expression ‘Father’, is one which John loves to use and we see this in verses 3, 10, 15, 17, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28 and 32.

Verses 1–4 give warning of conflict to come. The world,

including the religious world, will persecute the followers of Christ. Verses 7–15 reveal two works of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, who is described as one who stands alongside and exhorts or advocates.

- (a) He stands alongside the world in convicting and rebuking of sin, righteousness and judgement.
- (b) Toward the disciples, i.e. the Church, in revealing Jesus Christ.

In verse 5, ‘**But now**’ initiates change. Peter’s question in 13:36, ‘Lord, where are you going?’, was not a serious enquiry as to Jesus’ destination, for Peter’s attention was immediately diverted. He was more concerned with parting from Jesus than with where Jesus was going. Uppermost in his mind were the consequences for himself and his friends if Jesus left them. Self-interest always blinds us to wider and deeper implications of truth.

In verse 7 the main reason is given as to why our Lord’s departure means triumph and not tragedy. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, will not come unless He leaves. Jesus does not explain why this must be so, and various suggestions have been made. The Son’s leaving is a departure via the Cross. By His going, He brings redemption for His people. The Spirit is the one whose special task it is to apply the saving results of Christ to the lives of believers. But the Spirit cannot apply these results if there are no results to apply. Therefore, unless Jesus goes away, the Spirit cannot come. In addition, the gift of the Holy Spirit is a reward for the work of Christ (cf. Acts 2:33, ‘Exalted to the right hand of God, Jesus has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear’). The reward is not given until the

task for which it is given has been finished. Therefore, it is not until Jesus finishes His task that the Spirit can come.

Both Father and Son send the Spirit—‘I will send him to you’, i.e. to the disciples and to the Church, and His effect will be known by the world.

Dr. A. Plummer: ‘Humanity was to ascend to heaven before the Spirit could be sent to humanity on earth’.

‘I tell you the truth’—I who know and have never misled you am telling you this. ‘I go away’—in verse 5 is the concept of withdrawal, in verse 7 separation, and verse 10 the pressing on to a goal.

In verse 8 three aspects of the Advocate’s ministry are described. The word **‘convict’** means to cross-examine, so that an opponent is legally refuted. Verse 9 continues this picture. The basic sin of man puts self at the centre and refuses to believe; therefore sin means not to believe Jesus Christ. True repentance from sin leads to real conversion because there is total belief in Him. Note Acts 2:37: ‘When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”’. Peter’s sermon is the best commentary on the Spirit’s work.

It is one thing for us to say that the world is guilty, but only the Spirit can bring this truth home; therefore the Spirit secures a verdict of ‘guilty’ against the world. This means that to believe in Jesus Christ is to be saved from sin in the past, present and future and to be totally forgiven. Not to believe in Jesus Christ is to remain in sin, never to know forgiveness and to perish forever in sin. There is no middle ground.

Verse 10 continues the picture—‘*righteousness*’. In essence this means keeping the Law and is the natural result of faith, i.e. internal and external obedience and not moralistic behaviour as a performance. The Law here is the Law of Christ.

Righteousness is only established through the Cross.

The word *‘righteousness’* is found in John’s Gospel only here and in verse 8, and this righteousness through the Death and Resurrection of Jesus reveals both the Son and the Father.

Dr. C. K. Barrett: ‘Jesus’ death proved His complete obedience to the will of God, and His exultation proved that His righteousness was approved by more than human acclamation’.

It is important to understand that only the Spirit can show men that their righteousness before God depends not on their own efforts, but on Christ’s work on the Cross for them. In the same way, the Christian remains in this state of righteousness with God, not by self-effort, but through the work of the Spirit as He continually reveals to us the grace of God.

Verse 11 completes this little picture—‘Judgement’. The prince of this world already stood condemned (see John 12:31; 14:30; Col. 2:15; Rev. 20:10). In condemning Jesus Christ, the evil one condemned himself.

Summing up these verses, it is clear that through the preaching of the Good News, the Holy Spirit helps the Church, and does this by convicting the world with respect to its own sin of not believing in Christ; with regard to the righteousness of Christ, who by going to the Father is fully vindicated; and concerning the judgement of God, which has been pronounced on the prince of this world. Satan is defeated and the believer is no longer under judgement. It was dealt with at the Cross. The impact of this is revealed in Peter’s sermon in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost.

Note verse 12—‘Bear’ is used in 19:17 of Christ bearing His Cross. It means there are aspects of truth set before them which they cannot as yet understand, but they will come to comprehend when the Spirit fully enters their lives.

In verse 13 Jesus is stating that the Spirit and no other will

guide us, but He does not compel or drive us; He never pushes a doctrinal hobby-horse. He never veers off at a tangent. Everything He guides the believer into is supported by the Word of God. He will guide you into all the entirety of the truth and He shall not speak on His own authority. Like the Son, the Spirit does not speak what proceeds from Himself as distinct from what proceeds from the Father, e.g. I Corinthians 2:10 and 11. Therefore the Spirit is not originating something radically new, but leading believers in accordance with teaching already given by both the Father and the Son.

Examine verses 14 and 15—‘He will glorify me’, these are emphatic pronouns. The Son glorifies the Father by revealing Him (cf. 1:18 and 17:4). The Spirit glorifies the Son by revealing Him, too.

In both cases to ‘reveal’ means to ‘glorify’, for the more truth is known, the more it is adored. The Spirit’s work is Christocentric, but in saying that we must realize that there is no division within the Godhead. There is no thought of the Spirit emphasizing Christ and excluding the Father. There is no thought of having various ranks within the Godhead.

Dr. William Hendriksen: ‘There exists between the persons of the Trinity an eternal, voluntarily assumed relationship of love and friendship, each working for the glory and honour of the others’.

From verse 16 onwards, Jesus continues to speak about leaving them and seeks to comfort them and prepare them for this event.

It seems as if in verses 29 and 30 they have finally grasped His message, but there is still a lot more to learn. The warning of verses 31 and 32. The climax of verse 33 is thrilling encouragement—‘I have overcome the world’. The pro-noun is very emphatic. At the moment when He is faced with

treachery and death, Jesus Christ claims the triumphant victory. He speaks as if the Cross were behind him instead of facing Him. John uses the verb, ‘to conquer’ or ‘overcome’, only once and he is quoting the words of Jesus. In Revelation the expression occurs many times. There Jesus is pictured as having conquered, as continuing to conquer and going forth to conquer.

In his massive volume, The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, William Sheirer describes the dramatic events of D-Day. He recalls that on 6th June, 1944, a vast allied Armada slipped across the English Channel in weather that the Germans thought too inclement to permit an invasion attempt, and began disgorging thousands and thousands of troops on the beaches of Normandy. The Germans were caught by surprise, but quickly began a furious resistance. In a few short hours, the famous Luftwaffe had been driven from the air and the German Navy from the sea. The land fighting would continue for another year, but the outcome was assured. The initiative now lay with the allies, and they threw themselves into the conflict, willing to suffer and die in order to bring the victory that they could already see.

The Cross was Christ’s D-Day. On that occasion the forces of heaven and of hell locked together in mortal combat, and when the day ended, Christ had destroyed the power of evil, sin, death and the grave forever. The battle still rages, and will until Jesus Christ returns, but the outcome has been decided; victory is assured. The Christian in the context of the Church must be prepared to suffer. We still have spiritual enemies waging warfare against us. There may come deep hurt and even death for the cause of Christ, but remember, as He said even before the Cross, ‘Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world’.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

JESUS AT PRAYER**JOHN 17:1–26**

Except for our Lord's prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane, the first three Gospels give us no example of His prayers; but the fourth does. What we commonly refer to as the Lord's Prayer is not one that was offered by Jesus to the Father. But the prayer in John 17 is one that originated in the mind and heart of our Lord and was offered by Him to His Father. In this sense it is unique in the New Testament.

The synoptic Gospels have very little information on the content of our Lord's prayers and give us nothing to compare with John 17. On the other hand, the fourth Gospel has little reference to Jesus' prayer life, but does give special emphasis on the content of His prayers in chapters 11, 12 and 17.

This prayer may have been spoken in the Upper Room, but we are not sure. In one sense, it is a prayer model, e.g. the glory of God should be the purpose in prayer and also result in our concern for others. But in another sense the prayer cannot be a model, because it is unique considering that Jesus is here facing the Cross. It has always been known as the Great High Priestly prayer. It calls to mind the ministry of the High Priest

in Israel on the Day of Atonement. The High Priest would be in prayer for himself, his fellow priests and the Covenant community. Our High Priest prayed for Himself, the disciples and the whole Church. In a similar way the Hebrew High Priest and the sacrificial victim were consecrated or sanctified and through them the community of Israel was declared clean. So on the night in which He was betrayed, our Great High Priest consecrated Himself and through this the Church was sanctified. It is significant that the language He uses, the language of the Old Testament Priest and the language of the Letter to the Hebrews all have in common the priestly concepts of cleansing, sanctification, perfection and the priestly ministry in general.

The prayer begins with the word 'Father', and this expression occurs some six times in the prayer—verses 1, 5, 11, 21, 24 and 25. Therefore, underlying this whole prayer is the simplicity and confidence and familiarity which characterized the heart relationship between Father and Son. Even in the agony of death, it was the word 'Father' that sprang from the heart of our Lord (Luke 23:46, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit').

1. JESUS PRAYS FOR HIMSELF (vv. 1–5)

In verse 1 there is calm confidence and assurance of victory. The Cross and the Crown are here linked. We cannot over-emphasize the word '**Father**'. It is a supernatural word, for the Cross is the key to knowing the Father.

P. T. Forsyth stretches our understanding of 'Father' in our Lord's prayer by writing: 'The soul of divine fatherhood is forgiveness by holiness. It is evangelical. It is a matter of grace meeting sin by sacrifice to holiness, even more than of love

meeting need by service to man’.

In praying that the Father would glorify Him and that He might glorify His Father, Jesus and the Father both show their total harmony for mission in the world. In hearing these words, the disciples recognized the oneness of communication between Father and Son.

In the totality of life, and especially in the Church, there is a lack of godly authority in leadership and unless we find that authority in the Cross, we will find it nowhere else. In finding authority, and therefore our freedom in Christ through the Cross, we know that the hour has come, that He is Father, and therefore the Son has been glorified and the Father has been glorified.

To do His Father’s will has been the Son’s chief delight; e.g. 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 8:50.

Verse 5 reveals at least two vital truths:

- (a) The Son is a person distinct from the Father.
- (b) The Son is the same person who existed in Glory with the Father from all eternity; who worked in obedience to the Father on earth and who exists in Glory with the Father now.

‘With the glory which I had with thee before the world was made’—‘I had’ is imperfect tense and means continual possession—it refers back to the glory which the Son had in His divine nature and is now demonstrated through His human nature. The Word did not empty Himself of divine glory when the world began, nor at any other point of time, but when He became flesh, He veiled this glory during His humiliation because He was working amongst men. It was revealed in the Transfiguration and now that the work He came to do was

completed and there is only the Cross and Resurrection as climax, He requests the Father to glorify Him again with the glory that was His before the world began (cf. 1:14).

The two rays which emanate from that glory are grace and truth. The disciples came to realize this glory that Jesus had with the Father and they gazed upon the wonder of it (cf. Acts 7:55 and 9:3).

During the forty days of His resurrection appearances to the believers (never to unbelievers), our Lord’s glorified human nature was veiled to the extent that the disciples were able to behold their glorified Lord and realize that He had risen from the dead.

2. JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS APOSTLES (vv. 6–19)

Verse 9 means, ‘I am praying concerning my own, but I am not praying concerning the world’. The expressions ‘I’, ‘them’, ‘the world’, are emphatic. The expression, ‘pray’ (cf. 14:16) is the word always used by John when Jesus prays to His Father (16:26; 17:9, 15, 20) and never rendered ‘ask’ as in 14:13 and 14. In I John 5:16 both words are used. At other times Jesus does pray for unbelievers, but here He prays for His chosen few.

In verse 10 He continues to refer to the union between Father and Son. This means a double ownership. All that is the Father’s is equally the possession of the Son.

Martin Luther: ‘Everyone may say this, that all we have is God’s. But this is much greater, that He turns it around and says, all that is Thine is mine. This, no creature is able to say before God.’

‘**Holy Father**’ in verse 11 is the expression that occurs nowhere else. God is holy in the fact that He is absolutely

separated from all sin. His holiness is emphasized by His grace in which He works to save men from sin, and through the Cross He makes men holy. Let us understand, we do not make ourselves holy. He does the work through grace. The significant truth is that God's greatest attribute is not His love, but His holiness.

'May be one'. A oneness of belief that is based on union with Jesus Christ. Therefore, believers are one body in perfect spiritual union conforming to the essential union between Father, Son and Spirit. Jesus is not requesting that some day all denominations may become one, for in His day there were no denominations. He assumes that the disciples are already one, and this is more significant in the fact that His prayer precedes the Cross and at that time they all forsook Him and fled, yet they were still one.

The nature of protection does not mean exemption from attack and temptation, but freedom from the permanent influence of the enemy (v. 15). Jesus Christ is the one in whom His disciples live and move, so the evil one who is the ruler of this world is that one from whom He prays they may be kept (cf. I John 4:4: 'Little children, you are of God and have overcome them; for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world'). Therefore the relation of man to good and evil is a personal relation, 'he'.

Much has been said and written in recent years concerning the renewal of the Church; the inference being that the Church is not what it used to be. It has grown old and worn out and has lost that driving power and cutting edge that once made it a force in society to be reckoned with. The real quality of the Church's life is its uncompromising holiness which results in separation to the Father; not a separation from people or things, but a separation to Him.

Tertullian writes that at the end of the 2nd century, the pagans in the Circus of Carthage used this battle cry against the Christians: 'How long must we stand this third race?'

It is at that point that the Church needs to be renewed; not in doctrines or forms of government or evangelistic techniques, but in its essential holiness. Someone has said, 'There will have to be far-reaching changes in the outlook and pattern of spirituality in the Church before many who are at present outside its fold can find themselves at home in it'.

We are always being reminded of the enemy of the world, but the Church's real battle is not so much the war outside, but the struggle inside against spiritual termites who turn the fellowship into unbiblical paths and behaviour patterns.

Dr. Leonard Griffith in his book, The Eternal Legacy says, 'The renewal of the Church, if patterned on the mind of Christ as expressed in His prayer from the Upper Room, will have to begin with the renewal of the Church's holiness'.

'The truth' in verse 17 is the new environment in which believers are placed and links with verse 18 regarding their commission which is to be renewed (cf. 20:21).

3. JESUS PRAYS FOR HIS CHURCH (vv. 20-25)

In praying for the Church, our Lord is obviously seeing His believers reaching out to the world in the natural concern they will have as His holy people.

Verses 20 and 21 declare that the unity of believers is like the unity of the Father with the Son (cf. 10:30: 'I and the Father are one'). The divisions and animosities of Christians are a perpetual stumbling-block to the world (cf. v. 11). This oneness is in opposition to the world. The mystical oneness of believers resembles the essential oneness of the Godhead.

Between Father, Son and Spirit, a wonderful interpenetration exists. This is our model. The closest human relationship is the model of marriage.

But we can only be one with each other if we are one with Father, Son and Spirit.

‘So that the world may believe’. The fruit of this oneness is the power of God’s Word. The community or world is not stirred by our faith, but by our faith as people of the Book in obeying the teachings of the Book.

‘To behold my glory’ in verse 24 is to gaze upon continually; not a quick, cursory glance. The glory is that which is revealed in His exalted human nature (cf. I John 3:2). The prayer of Jesus reaches back into eternity to the eternal, holy love of God and reaches forward into eternity and the glory which will be ours with Christ.

In verse 25 Jesus closes with a word of complete confidence that He knows the righteous Father. In laying the facts before His Father, Jesus knows that He is righteous Father. ‘And these know that thou has sent me.’ Jesus is referring to the eleven, but what applies to them applies to us. The verb ‘know’ means intensive knowledge of full realization. It means that the eleven were faced with the alternative of following the ignorance of the world or the knowledge which the Son had revealed, and they were drawn to Him, and in knowing Him, came to know the Father. The same is true of us.

In verse 26 the last words of the prayer sum up its purpose. His physical presence will leave but His spiritual presence remains forever.

We have glimpsed the picture of a Holy Father, whose holiness is demonstrated in love and the grace of the Cross. The miracle is not that God should love His children or even those in the world, but that He should love, forgive and buy

back His enemies; that His holiness can, through the Cross, make all men holy. This is the essence of Fatherhood.

As P. T. Forsyth writes: ‘It is the Fatherhood of the Cross, with the grace which that Fatherhood shows, and the atonement it finds’.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

JESUS THE KING**JOHN 18:28–40**

Jesus meets the charge of being a King with the calm statement of its spiritual nature (cf. vv. 33–38).

Verses 1–14, the arrest—verses 15–27, the denial—verses 28–40, the rejection. The corruption controlling the Jewish Priesthood is shown in that two men were in control. Annas and Caiaphas were partners in the Temple trade and hated Jesus for twice clearing the Temple. They were more concerned with making money out of God's people.

A lot has been written about the illegal aspects of the trial of Jesus Christ. It was held at night, the prisoner was assumed guilty, they hired false witnesses, permitted the prisoner to be mistreated while bound, and allowed Him no defence. After the secret night trial, the crafty Jews led Him to Pilate for the final death sentence. Pilate comes through as a coward and at least seven times goes from the hall to the Jews outside seeking to bring about some compromise.

In all of this, Jesus seeks to explain the spiritual nature of His Kingdom, but this does not compute with the preconceived ideas of either the Sanhedrin or Pilate. His graphic

question, '**What is truth?**', has been asked by philosophers for hundreds of years. In 14:6 Jesus states: '**I am the truth**'—in 17:17: 'Your word is truth'—I John 5:7: 'The Spirit is truth'. At the end of the story in verse 39, Pilate states to the Jews: 'You have a custom'. How sad that he knew that religious custom but did not know Jesus Christ. We see again in the story that there are many who are careful to observe religious holidays and customs and the trappings of making a religious impression, but are ignorant of what Christ can mean and do within the life.

John's account links in with the other Gospel writers who tell us that Jesus was tried formerly by Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin, the Jewish legal tribunal. Verse 28 states: 'It was early'. A Roman Court could be held directly after sunrise. Pilate knew an important case was coming so he could have been ready to open his Court as early as 4 or 5 a.m., but the hierarchy were in difficulty. It was not safe to arrest Jesus in daylight and the Sanhedrin could not legally pronounce sentence of death at night, so they had to wait until dawn to condemn Him.

A further regulation was that a day must pass before sentence and execution. They got around this by approaching Pilate, the Roman Governor. He was to fix the time and their insistence would secure immediate execution. In this way they shifted the matter from themselves to him.

If Jews entered a Gentile's house they would be defiled or ceremoniously unclean. Here they are more concerned with ceremonial defilement than moral corruption. In addition, and we must see it with sarcasm, everything had to be done before the religious duties of the Sabbath.

The Old Testament ceremonial regulations contain no item regarding defilement by entering a Gentile house. The Rabbis

extended this law to include Gentile homes. Sin blinds to the extent that here are men, religious men, openly concerned to see judicial murder take place, and yet quibbling about a human tradition.

Because they would not enter the Roman Governor's residence or Praetorium, Pilate went out to meet them. It is suggested that this was a Roman concession to Jewish religious pressure. He knows the charge but strict procedure demands formality. In addition, Roman Court proceedings were conducted in public areas, on the street or the market place. So Pilate takes his seat in the Judge's chair on the Rostrum and begins the trial. The Roman method was not to try and discover the truth as our Courts perform, but rather deal with straightforward accusations.

In verse 30 the Jews are really declaring that there is no question about Him being an evildoer, and this is why they are delivering Him up to Pilate. They demonstrated to such an extent that it looked as if Jesus must be the worst of criminals. If everything is so terrible and He has no way out, why not state the charge so that Pilate sees it clearly? But they rely on inference and innuendo. They want Pilate to sign their own Jewish verdict and make it his own by ordering the execution of Jesus. They are certainly the judges, but they want Pilate to take the blame. By large numbers and loud voices and positive actions they hope to force Pilate to agree with them.

If they will not lay specific charges, Pilate will not deal with the case (v. 31). He may have remembered the pressure from his wife to have nothing to do with Jesus (Matt. 27:19). Verse 32 shows that God the Father never lost control of the situation regarding His Son. If the Sanhedrin had executed Jesus for blasphemy or as a false prophet, He would have been stoned to death, but every attempt to stone Him previously had failed.

The Jews had other forms of capital punishment but they did not use crucifixion (cf. 12:32 and 33, ' . . . But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself'. He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die'.

In verses 33–37 Jesus is personally examined by Pilate. All four Gospels record Pilate's first words to Jesus: 'Are you the king of the Jews?' (v. 33), and in all four there is an emphasis on 'you'. Jesus' appearance is in stark contrast to earthly royalty. The Sanhedrin want Pilate to recognize 'king' in a political concept as one claiming secular power and leading Jewish rebellion against Roman authority (cf. 6:15 where Jesus repudiated such an idea of kingship).

Professor James Stewart has a sermon on verse 34. He suggests that behind the question is the idea that men then and now are content with a second-hand religion. They are content because it is safer. They can sit on the sidelines and remain as spectators and not come to grips with the truth of Jesus Christ. And then he says it is easier. He talks about the man who said to Henry Drummond, 'I used to be concerned about religion, but religion is a great subject and I was busy and there was little time to settle it for myself, so I became a Catholic and instead of dabbling any longer in religion myself, just left it to the church to do everything for me. Once a year I go to Mass'. You see, it is far more comfortable to deal with Jesus Christ by proxy than to face Him alone, but in the end we all have to face Him alone as Saviour and friend, or as Judge.

A man was listening one night to an astronomer lecturing on the stars. The hall was stuffy, the lecture was dull, and the charts and diagrams not very helpful. The man could finally bear it no longer. He arose and wandered out into the night and looked up at

the stars themselves. Dr. James Stewart says that the New Testament cries for men to come forth in the name of God out of those stuffy places and look up with their own eyes and realize what God and life and truth and the Cross are all about.

In verse 35 Pilate refutes as a Roman, any interest in Jewish questions. Jesus replies in verse 36: 'My kingship is not of this world'. The word 'my' is emphasized through the verse. Pilate cannot understand any thought of Kingship with Jesus. It seemed incredible, but the Master speaks of His King-ship as really being self-evident. The issue here is not regarding subjects or the dominion of the king, except that Jesus is King and He is the opposite of all earthly rulers. They are kings because their subjects make them kings, but Jesus is King because He is King, and we are His subjects because He is in control.

'So you are a king?', questions Pilate in verse 37. 'You' is more emphatic than verse 33. Pilate is curious and surprised. 'For this I was born and for this I have come into the world', says Jesus. The verbs here are perfect tense and mean an event in the past which continues to affect the present. Our Lord has come and He remains. He stands alone among men. He bears witness in support and in defence of the truth because He personifies truth.

But Pilate misses the whole impact. In verse 38, 'What is truth?'—not the truth, but any truth. It is the half-impatient question of a man of the world. Pilate is a practical, pagan sceptic. The educated Roman world had no faith in its own gods but continued their idolatrous rites. They have so many disciples in the 20th century.

We see in verses 38–40 that Pilate pronounces Jesus innocent and offers to release Him in honour of the Feast. 'No', cries the mob, '*Barabbas*'. Pilate hopes to release Jesus on

account of the Feast rather than on the basis of His innocence, for then He would contradict the Sanhedrin who had already pronounced Him guilty, and then he could walk away feeling very pleased with his performance. But that was not to be.

Barabbas means son of Abba (Father).

Dr. Alfred Plummer has written: 'The innocent Son of the Father is rejected for the blood-stained son of a father'.

It is ironic that the Jewish hierarchy obtained the release of one who had committed the same political crime that they levelled at Jesus—sedition. Barabbas had done what Jesus had refused to do—take action against the Romans.

Are you religious or Christian?

The story has been told many times of how John Wesley always thought he was a true Christian. He was in a ship which was caught in an Atlantic storm and was captured by fear. He noticed that the only people on board who were not terror-stricken were a little group of Moravian Missionaries. When the storm eased he asked, 'Were you not afraid?' 'Afraid?', said one Moravian, 'Why should I be afraid? I know Christ'. And then looking at Wesley with disconcerting frankness, 'Do you know Christ?', he asked. At that Wesley for the first time in his life realized he did not. When it comes to that situation, a second-hand religion is always insecure. Jesus is the King.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

**ARE YOU RELIGIOUS OR
CHRISTIAN?**

JOHN 19:23–30

The famous missionary to the North American Indians, David Brainerd, constantly proclaimed the message of the Cross in his ministry. He said, 'I never got away from Jesus and Him crucified in my preaching. I found that once these people were gripped by the great evangelical meaning of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf, I did not have to give them many instructions about changing their behaviour'.

When Charles Spurgeon was dying he testified to a friend, 'My theology now is found in four little words: Jesus died for me. I don't say this is all I would preach if I were to be raised up again, but it is more than enough for me to die upon'.

On the first Good Friday at the ninth hour, around 3 p.m. our time, in approximately the year 30 A.D., Jesus Christ died on a Cross outside the walls of Jerusalem. His last utterance according to John's Gospel was one brief triumphant shout, '**Tetelastai**'—'It is finished'.

The other three Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, do not

Are you religious or Christian?

tell us that Jesus said 'It is finished', but they do record that He died with a great shout upon His lips. John however, does not mention the great shout. His was an eye-witness account of the Crucifixion and he heard the actual word which our Lord uttered. Therefore, the great shout and the words, 'It is finished', are one and the same.

To aid Him in His utterance He had asked for wine to moisten His lips. Then the Son went home to the Father after doing the Father's will. No wonder His voice rose to its loudest pitch.

The work of reconciliation and atonement is complete. He '**gave up his spirit**'. His death was entirely voluntary. In fact, none of the Gospel writers say He died, and although He did die, it was of His own volition.

The Spirit of Jesus did not enter Sheol or Hades and remain there until resurrection. His Spirit went to the Father. The place called Paradise, into which the penitent thief's spirit also passed to be with Jesus that day, is Heaven.

'**He bowed his head.**' John alone mentions this. A peaceful death of One who trusts His Father just like a child lays his head on his father's shoulder and goes to sleep

'**It is finished.**' But what was finished? We have to look deeper than the surface. In John 4:34, Jesus said to the disciples who returned after His conversation with the woman by the well and were concerned that He had not eaten, 'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work'. The work which the Father commissioned Him to perform was completed on the Cross.

A. M. Hunter: 'In Christ's own picture phrases this means, I have drained the cup, I have travelled the road, I have paid the price—metaphors all of them no doubt; perhaps only in metaphors could our Lord describe His work ere it was done. The

work was finished and of the results of that finished work, Christians all down the centuries have never doubted' (Expository Times LXIII, p. 186. Quoted by Leon Morris in *The Cross in the N.T.*, p. 179, Paternoster Press, Devon, England, 1967).

What was this work? We answer the question from three picture phrases which He Himself used.

1. A CUP TO BE DRUNK

To James and John He asked, '*Can you drink of the cup that I am drinking?*' (Mark 10:38). In the Garden of Gethsemane He prayed, '*O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me*' (Mark 14:36).

What did Christ mean by 'this cup'? As a rule we use the word for some joyful experience and say in times of happiness, 'My cup is filled to overflowing'.

But in the Bible a cup often signifies some bitter experience. It represents that which has been appointed by God and often something of affliction: a cup of anguish and trouble, and this was the cup of which our Lord spoke.

Was it some actual physical pain of the Cross? Was that death by crucifixion uppermost in His mind? No. Certainly death by crucifixion was one of the cruelest and foulest punishments, yet hundreds of people before Jesus had endured it bravely. There is much more than physical pain. Nor was it just the social aspect of crucifixion.

Karl Barth writes that when an Israelite was crucified, that meant that he was accursed, expelled, not only from the realm of the living but from the Covenant with God, removed from the circle of the elect. Crucified means rejected, handed over to the death of the gallows inflicted on the heathen. Let us be

clear what is involved in the judgement of God, in which the human creature has to suffer from God's side as a sinful creature; he is involved in rejection, in the curse; 'cursed is he that dies on the cross'. What befalls Christ is what ought to befall us.

The cup suggests that experience when the sinless Son of God accepts from the Father the cup of our sin and drinks it in the sense that He was made sin for us.

He suffered wrath and judgement and all the horror that evil could unleash. Because He went through, not just the physical, but the spiritual reality of sin and drank the cup to the last drop, He could then say, 'It is finished' (John 19:30).

2. A ROAD TO BE TRAVELLED

Foretelling His own death Jesus said, '*The Son of man goes as it is written of him*' (Matt. 26:24). We might explain that by saying He is travelling the road mapped out for Him in the Scriptures. If we ask what road in Scripture, the only answer is that path of shame and death mapped out before all eternity; but a path that is described in Isaiah 53 which tells of the suffering servant, despised and rejected of men.

It is a road of the Spirit which Christ knew He had to travel, and as we read the Gospels, we see that it leads Him through one actual place after another in Galilee and Judea. In this earthly scene it begins at His baptism in Jordan, winds through the barren wilderness near the Dead Sea where He was tempted to swerve aside from the path, and then takes a decisive turning point at Caesarea Philippi when 'He set his face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem' (Luke 9:51).

From that point onwards the road slopes down into the dark valley until at its lowest descent there falls across His path the

darkness and shadow of the Cross.

Yet He presses on unflinching to the end of the road and climbs the hill of Calvary and only then can He say, 'I have travelled the road, it is finished'.

In other words, Jesus knew where He was going in life because of His fellowship with the Father. Do you know where you are going?

3. A PRICE TO BE PAID

On one occasion He said, '*The Son of man came not to be served but to serve and give his life a ransom for many*' (Mark 10:45).

Thousands of words have been expended on this great saying, and yet after all the scholarship no one has ever fathomed completely its depths. As the hymn says, 'None of the ransomed ever knew how deep were the waters crossed'.

Whatever else it means, it teaches that by their sin the lives of human beings had become forfeit, and that Jesus knew Himself called by the sacrifice of His own sinless life to release us from the doom of hell. The price had to be paid and it had to be paid by the God-man.

On the Cross, He knew that the price had been met, and with a triumphant cry, 'Tetelastai', He gives up His spirit to the Father.

It is finished, the Messiah's work of bringing man back to God was accomplished. Prophecies of the Old Testament had been fulfilled.

In our Lord's picture phrases, 'I have drained the cup'—'I have travelled the road'—'I have paid the price'. All of them metaphors, but with such vital meaning.

He did not say, 'It is finished', in weary defeat. But as one

who shouts for joy because the victory is accomplished.

A well-known picture was painted at an Army Camp during the first World War. It shows a signaller lying dead in No Man's Land between the two armies. He has been sent out to repair a cable broken by shell fire.

He lay cold in death but with his task fulfilled, for in his stiffened hands he holds together the cable's broken ends. Beneath the picture is one word, 'Through'.

This is a picture parallel of what we believe about the finished work of Jesus Christ. Sin had snapped the contact between God and man. Christ by His death has brought together the broken ends. He has restored the broken fellowship between man and God. The Cross and its impact comes to us today, but we need to respond to know the real joy of being forgiven.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE RISEN CHRIST**JOHN 20:11–18**

There are some very human stories at the end of each of the four Gospels. Accounts of those who wept, doubted and hid themselves; who walked and discussed events with no real hope for the future, and the appearance of the risen Christ to such people.

For example, Jesus and Peter. The message of the risen Christ comes first to the man who had failed and denied Him. ‘Tell Peter.’ Peter could make excuses for the rest of the disciples who had run away, but he could make no excuses for himself. The human touch comes through, for the Lord wants to meet Peter at their old spot on the shores of the lake.

Jesus appeared to Thomas, the man with real and honest doubts. Thomas had declared that unless he could see and touch the Lord he would not believe. Jesus appeared and challenged Thomas to reach out and touch.

Then a further very human reaction of the frightened disciples barring the door of the room where they were hiding for fear of the Jews. The risen Christ passing through into

that closed room and meeting their need with the words, ‘*Do not be afraid*’.

Then He appeared to some of the disciples on the occasion when they were unsuccessful in fishing, and by inference told them, ‘You cannot make a success even of fishing if you are not in touch with Me’.

These are all domestic, human interest stories right where we live in our joys and sorrows, questions and frustrations, but the most tender account of all is that involving Mary Magdalene. She owed so much to the Master for He had restored her from involvement with evil spirits and the occult. With the other women she had accompanied Him in much of the ministry during the previous two years.

It was her love for Him which took her to the Garden Tomb while it was still dark. She met and talked with angels at that empty Tomb, but even this did not relieve her deep sorrow.

Verse 11 is a picture of constant, unrestrained sobbing. A very human grief takes control of her emotions and outlook. Because Mary has given herself over to grief, nothing else registers on her mind. The angels with their white garments are said to indicate holiness, joy and victory: the triumph of life over death. We do not know why the angels appeared to Mary and not to Peter and John who by now had left the scene.

The angels’ question in verse 13, ‘Woman why are you weeping?’, implied the fact that it was time for joy and not weeping. If His body had still been in the Tomb it would have been the occasion for weeping; but He had risen. We are often like Mary and grieve over some person or situation or past event where there is no real cause for grief. Genuine grief must be faced, but so often we allow it to obscure what is now more real.

She could not minister the embalming spices to His body.

Her desire to express the love of a broken heart was denied. She had forgotten what He had said about rising from the dead. Even the fact of the great stone covering the entrance now being at one side and the empty grave clothes should have been her proof.

Verse 14 does not tell us why Mary turned to face the new arrival. It was not because she heard His footsteps, for His appearance was sudden. Her lack of recognition was the inability to comprehend His identity. Her grief was concerning His dead body.

So she addressed the figure whom she assumed to be the gardener, '*They have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they have put him . . . If you took him away, sir, tell me where you have put him and I will go and get him*'. Mary never thought of the practical difficulties of how one woman could move the weight of a dead body. In verse 15 the risen Christ had asked, 'Whom do you seek?', not 'What'. She was looking for something. He was reminding her of someone. That she presumed Him to be the gardener proves that He had a human form, but also a different form; for He was in a super-natural state and we cannot explain further His appearance. From logic who else would be there but the gardener or the caretaker, but her logic let her down. She was computing the wrong image of Jesus in her mind.

The image of Jesus that we have before us needs to be one from the Scriptures, not one we manufacture to fit the patterns of our own programming.

Then the dawn-shrouded figure uttered one word, 'Mary'. Actually, He used the Aramaic name by which her family and friends called her, and the name He always used for her, 'Miriam'. Hearing her own name in her own language, she realized that only one person could pronounce it like that. Like

a flash the realization cleared her mind (cf. 10:3 and 4).

Jesus did not object to being touched (cf. v. 27), but He wanted Mary to realize that the previous mode of fellowship was to be replaced with a spiritual communion. '*Do not continue holding on to me*'. She was grasping Him tight in case He went again. All her loss is now turned into sudden pos-session. If she can hang on to Him in the old way of physical possession, she will feel safe.

But Jesus introduced a new dignity into their friendship and wanted her to see that things had changed. Death and Resurrection had ushered in a new era. 'Do not hold on to me Mary'. Mary and the others had to learn that their future fellowship was on a deeper level of the Spirit. It would not be by sight or human companionship, but through the indwelling Spirit.

Verse 17 raises three aspects of the change which has occurred.

1. HE INAUGURATED A NEW RELATIONSHIP

Verse 17—'Go to my brothers'. This is a new name and the first time He has used it. Previously He called them friends. It did not mean that there was a change in them, but certainly a change in Him, and therefore one which affected them. Brothers share the same inheritance (cf. Rom. 8:15–17) and the same Father.

Martin Luther:

If now Christ is our brother, I would like to know what we still lack. Brethren in the flesh have common possessions, have together one father, one inheritance, otherwise they would not be brethren; so we have common possession with Christ and have

together one Father and one inheritance, which does not grow less when divided but whoever has one part of the spiritual inheritance has it all (Luther quoted by R. C. H. Lenski).

It is important to realize that the emphasis here is on what becomes ours rather than on the thought of Him being our brother. While there is an element of truth in this, it can become over-familiar.

The risen Christ declares, '**I am ascending**'. This is present tense. His ascension to the Father has already begun. He explains that the term of their being brothers also means that His Sonship differs from theirs. Therefore He does not refer to 'our Father' but to 'my Father and your Father'. He is Son by nature, they are sons by adoption, i.e. He is teaching 'by nature Mine, but by grace, yours'.

2. HE INSPIRED A NEW REVERENCE

'**Do not hold on to me.**' Mary had to learn the hard lesson, as did the others, that the earthly physical friendship had now ended.

It may be sentimentalism or emotion or selfishness or fear which makes us want to keep Jesus where we want Him. Many people are devoted to old ways, ancient methods, and musty concepts simply because anything new disturbs them and breaks them out of their cocoon. While we appreciate this, we must see that there is a continued freshness in keeping up with what the Spirit is doing. We cannot place Jesus Christ nor the workings of His Spirit, nor ideas of how He should be worshipped, into confined areas for our own convenience and satisfaction. '*Do not hold on to me . . . but go to my brothers and tell them*'.

3. HE INTRODUCED A NEW RESPONSIBILITY

'Go to my brothers and tell them for me . . .' Obedience and the life of witness is the outcome and proof that we know the risen Lord. Once we know Him and are filled with Him we cannot help but demonstrate this to others.

Verse 18 is refreshing. The present tenses in this verse paint a vivid picture. This is a changed Mary, for the grief, fear and tears are all gone. Of course they are gone. She has met Him. If she had come back from ministering to His body, the old situation would still be existing. She is different, because in meeting Him, He has made her different. Did the eleven believe her? Except for John who later tells the story, they did not (cf. v. 8). Do you believe Him?

Personal belief is shown in the account of a young Asian Christian who was travelling to America to study at University. A fellow passenger noticed him reading his Bible. They began to talk and the other man attempted to pull down the credibility of the Bible and then added, 'But of course I would not like to disturb your faith in Christ', with something of a mocking tone. The young Asian Christian student replied, 'Sir, if you could disturb my faith in Christ, He would not be a big enough Saviour for me'.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

JESUS AND PETER**JOHN 21:1–25**

This is one of the most significant post-resurrection appearances of our Lord. Peter and his friends have a sense of aimlessness, not only at the lack of fish, but regarding their inner lack of reality and purpose. In particular Peter needs the experience of forgiveness.

Verses 30 and 31 of chapter 20 are a beautiful ending to the Gospel. Why did John add another section? Various reasons have been put forward, e.g. to prove that the risen Christ still takes an interest in His church, and that His power and love is not diminished; to remind the disciples that they are fishers, not just for fish, but for men. Also, and more importantly, they will be shepherds who will care for the sheep; to emphasize to the church that Peter has been fully reinstated, his forgiveness is complete; to stress once again the comforting truth of predestination in this sense, that whatever happens in our lives has been wisely ordained by the Lord. Even the manner of Peter's death is predicted. It is a comfort to know that the Lord is fully aware of our daily situation. To remove the

misunderstanding and banish any rumour that Jesus was meaning that John would not die before His return; and also to explain why many other events that occurred during our Lord's earthly life are not recorded.

The chapter breaks up into three sections quite easily. Verses 1–14, Jesus Christ and the Christian community. Verses 15–22, Jesus and the Christian individual. Verses 23–25, final comments.

Verse 1—Jesus '**manifested**' Himself. The story begins with Jesus taking the initiative in appearing to these disillusioned men who went fishing with Peter. The frustration of their inability to catch fish must have burnt their disillusionment at life even more deeply into their souls. Night-time was the best for fishing and these men were professionals, but the catch was nil (cf. 15:5, 'Apart from me you can do nothing').

Verse 4ff.—Peter generally acts before John; but John generally understands before Peter. As Jesus calls out to them, it's the word that we might say, 'lads, mates, fellas'. He asks the question to have them realize that their return to former occupation meant failure. There is nothing wrong with fishing, but these men were being called to a greater task. '**Without me you can do nothing.**'

When the miracle catch occurs (v. 6), John writes that they kept on exerting themselves to haul in the net.

He adds the eye-witness touch (v. 7). The fisherman's coat was an upper garment which Peter had cast aside and was probably only dressed in a loin-cloth, or an ordinary work garment which reached to above the knees, with short sleeves which hung loose. The word naked does not mean totally naked; it is used in the army to describe a soldier being ceremonially undressed, or naked if he is without his hat, gaiters or belt. Peter

and John combine in this incident and William Hendricksen writes: 'In the Kingdom of God the man of action and the man of vision complement each other'. John recognizes Jesus and Peter jumps forth to meet Him.

Verse 11 has given rise to much conjecture. Why 153 fish? Simply because there were 153 fish caught.

Jesus then says, '**Come and have breakfast**'. Here realization dawns and they know who it is, but they are afraid to approach Him so He comes to them. Isn't it wonderful that Jesus pre-pares breakfast for them (cf. 6:11)? We do not know how the fish were provided, but it was not from their catch; it was a gift from the Lord to His disciples.

In verse 14 the same word is used as verse 1, where it 'was manifested', This was never to His enemies, but to His friends.

Verse 15 begins a new section, but it is the touchstone of the whole story, for Peter has been forgiven, and he and the others are entrusted with the care of the flock. The word love in verses 15 and 16 is the highest word for love, agape, but in his three answers, Peter uses *philein* and so in the third question of verse 17, Jesus departs from His word and uses Peter's. A lot has been written and said about these particular words. Peter's preference for a *phileil* expression of love is one of natural affection, it is a warm word. In Peter's mind the divine concept may seem too high and even cold, because he needs encouragement. Therefore instead of the intelligent love and purpose and whole-hearted devotion which Jesus asked for, Peter substitutes the more subjective affection. But notice that he does not boast. He is honest and real both with himself and with Jesus, and in this we must admire him and learn lessons for our own lives.

'Peter, do you love me more than your companions?' He is

not asking Peter whether he loves Him more than the net or the boat or the fishes. It is not that we have to regard our employment or the natural circumstances of life as wrong or evil in the call of Christ. It is to a comparative few that the call comes for what we call 'full-time' service. We need to realize that all of us are in full-time service. That is our call.

In Peter's reply he does not compare himself with the other men. He has nothing to appeal to, but believes his affection is real. He makes no profession about the future, for the present is all he can be certain of.

'**You know that I love you.**' 'You' is emphatic, signifying that he trusts Jesus' knowledge of him rather than his own estimate of himself. There is no punishment or lecture from the Master, only the fresh charge and commission: 'Feed my lambs'. Here the fisherman becomes the shepherd.

In verse 16 it is the same word 'love', and the call is to tend or shepherd My sheep, to take care of them. The word 'feed' in verses 15 and 17 means to supply with food, but the word in verse 16 means 'be a shepherd', i.e. a guide. The chief need of the little lambs is food rather than guidance, but the sheep require both food and guidance.

Peter's three denials are matched by three affirmations of love, but why was Peter hurt and grieved (v. 17)? Because he had not taken our Lord's standard but had clung to his own standard and in this he felt safer, but now Jesus even questions Peter's assessment of the situation. It is a very deep personal involvement between the two of them. It was not the question repeated three times that upset him, nor the fact of his devotion being questioned. What got through to Peter was that even the humble form of love that he had professed in all honesty seemed to be doubted by Jesus. 'Now Peter, do you really have affection for me?' '*Lord, you know all things.*'

The early Church fathers, Tertullian, Eusebius and Origen, refer to Peter's crucifixion in Rome as being upside down (vv. 18 and 19).

Peter is told to follow, but John does so without being asked, therefore Peter's question is natural, 'What about him?'. Peter's future is to suffer, but John's is to extend into old age and exile as the last survivor of the group. Jesus in verse 22, tells Peter 'You must follow me'. The 'you' is emphatic. We do not all go the same way and He has a plan for each one of us as members of His team.

Much conjecture has arisen from verse 23. The mistake is that Christians generally, in those days, expected the Lord to return in their own lifetime and this is simply put in, perhaps by John, perhaps by an editor, to explain the situation.

This magnificent story is summed up in verses 24 and 25, and John here reveals himself as the one who wrote these words.

Chuck Colson tells us in his gripping account, 'Born Again' (H. & S.), how in autumn 1969 a call, for which he had hoped, came from the White House. Into the oval office he walked, through the private entrance used only by the staff.

'As I stepped for the first time into the sun-filled, stark-white, curving walled room, my heart was beating so hard I wondered if it could be heard. The President sat at a large mahogany desk. He glanced up—flashed a broad grin: 'Sit down, boy. Good to see you again. I'll be with you in a minute'. With that his eyes returned to the brown leather folder on which I could read in gold embossed letters: DAILY INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY . . . THE PRESIDENT.

'Not the person I'd known for so many years, but the President. Just to be in the same room was exciting enough, but now I was here alone with the President, the single most important man in the world, and here as a member of his staff. My life, the whole 38 years of it, was about to be fulfilled'.

Colson's life with Richard Nixon and Watergate was fulfilled in disgrace but through that gutter type experience he met Jesus Christ.

Surely the significant fact of Jesus' Resurrection appearance is that the man who failed and failed repeatedly does not have to grovel, but is searchingly commissioned and reinstated with the highest commission of all; to be a *Pastor*.

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