

Insights In The Gospel Of John

by
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The One Who Sets Us Free

The topic for this study obviously refers to the Person and the work of Jesus Christ. We say about Him He is the One who sets us free. And this is His work with reference to human beings. Our attention is first directed to a significant statement found in John chapter 20, verses 30-31. When John had finished his account of how the risen Jesus of Nazareth convinced the doubting Thomas that He was really alive in the physical body, John wrote these words:

"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God ; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30-31).

It is not clear whether John is referring to all the signs in the whole book of John, or only to those signs that Christ Jesus manifested to convince the apostles that He had actually been raised from the dead in His corporeal body. Apparently His identity was to be established on the basis of what He did in their sight. Did you notice that, in the way in which it reads – "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God " – it seems to say that in order that you might believe, John described the signs that Jesus did in the presence of His disciples.

Israel had long understood that Messiah (Who is "the Christ") would come to deliver the people of God. It had been an error in interpretation to hold that this promise would mean national or political deliverance. It belonged to the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, and the interpretation of the Gospel by the apostles, to reveal that the deliverance would be basically spiritual in nature. Thus Jesus of Nazareth spoke of a woman He had healed as being one whom Satan had bound for so many years. And Paul defined his commission before Agrippa by saying that the risen Lord had told him:

" . . . I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in thee which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me"
(Acts 26:15-18).

That is the way Paul put it, as to what he understood he was to do in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

It seems to have been a popular idea that Messiah should deliver the Jews from the power of Rome; but Jesus of Nazareth told Pilate plainly "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). We need to be very careful today that zealous persons do not succeed in directing the interest of sincere believers toward some social program, aiming to set people free from unfavorable social circumstances under the guise of carrying on the work of Christ. That is not what He particularly came to do. He came to deliver souls, yes, but not with reference to any social situation.

The new birth is spiritual in nature, as you can see in the way Jesus of Nazareth dealt with Nicodemus, when he came and talked to Him, in John chapter 3, verses 4 to 13. And just so is the deliverance that is effected by Christ, spiritual in nature. This will be more openly emphasized later in this study.

The second passage of Scripture to which our attention is drawn is one that is omitted in some of the newer translations. The fact is that this story, which we are going to study, is omitted from some of the ancient manuscripts. I personally am glad to accept it as a portion of the inspired Word, but I do think the interpretation should be carefully handled. This is the incident of the woman taken in adultery. I think this should not be interpreted apart from the context of all that we know about Jesus Christ. That the sinner can be assured that Christ Jesus will forgive the repentant soul, is no doubt gloriously true; but to gain the impression that sinners will be forgiven simply because Christ will not judge them is a grievous error.

No doubt this woman was set free from her guilt; but what was not yet known at the time of this incident, was that Christ Jesus could forgive her because He would die for her sin; He was the propitiation for her sin (I John 2:2). He personally would suffer death for her sin, and so she could go free as delivered from guilt because He had died for her. An Old Testament Scripture is pertinent here "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin."

But the whole matter of deliverance is more clearly developed in our third portion of Scripture we are to study. This is found in John chapter 8 verses 31-45. And I think that is so important that we should just read it:

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father, and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not." (John 8:31-45).

I read the whole passage to you that you might be very sure in your own heart and mind that at this time the Lord Jesus is making it very, very clear, how He is going to interpret the meaning of the Fatherhood of God. By noting the account statement by statement as I read it to you, we may receive much light on the issues that are involved. Notice again: "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Continuing in the Word of Jesus of Nazareth means more than an attitude of willing response to Him as Lord. The Word of Jesus of Nazareth has a content. It says something. He taught something. He presented a message which included a directive – a commandment to any and all who would follow Him. "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." That was the Word of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus "continue in my word" calls for yielding into the will of the Lord, who will lead each believer to his own self-crucifixion that he, the believer, might die to self, in order that he might be raised from the dead in the newness of life to do the will of God.

"And ye shall know the truth" – what truth? the truth about what? You shall know the truth of deliverance. This is the basis of the whole strategy of God in His plan of salvation. The truth of being set free from bondage is discussed by Paul in Romans chapters 6, 7 and 8. In Romans chapter 7 Paul points

out that while a woman is married to one man she is not free to marry another. But, if her husband dies then she is free to marry another. This illustrates the truth he had been expounding in the 6th chapter.

Sin operates in the flesh. Temptation and sinning and habits of sinning are lodged in the flesh, in the human nature. As long as I live in the flesh I am vulnerable to the motions of sin that are in my members. But when my flesh dies, it is no longer susceptible to temptation. My habits of sinning are lodged in my flesh and because of these I am vulnerable to the attacks of the enemy. But when my flesh is dead, when I reckon my flesh indeed to be dead, it is no longer sensitive to the alluring aspects of sin.

This then is the strategy to set me free. By having me reckon myself "indeed to be dead unto sin," I escape the clutch that sin has on me because of my habits. Through faith I am crucified with Christ, buried with Him in baptism, and sharing in His resurrection in the newness of life. All this is described by Paul in Romans 6:3-11. This truth is really known only by those who "continue in my word," who are truly His disciples, because they follow Him all the way. It is then that "the truth shall make you free."

I am sure as I have been going along in this consideration and discussion, you will have been realizing and feeling that this freedom does not mean that a person who has done wrong will be set free from his guilt to go out and do the best he can from there on. No. It is not a matter of being forgiven my sins so that I can be without guilt, and then I can make a fresh start with the hope of doing better on my second chance. It is a matter of being forgiven so that I will not be destroyed; but also it is a matter of being changed in such a way that I will not need to sin as I once did. This is real deliverance: not only am I delivered from the fear of judgment and from the dread of meeting an angry God in direct confrontation about my sinful conduct; but I now am set free from the bondage of sin that had been lodged in my flesh. This is the truth that sets me free.

The Jews refused to accept this offer for actual freedom from sin, and based their rejection on one of the common procedures of the human heart. Claiming the benefits of their relationship as the seed of Abraham, they denied being in any kind of bondage. But they were! Thus they asked "What do you mean Who promised to set us free? We are already free." But they were not.

Jesus of Nazareth then changed the line of discussion, by affirming that "whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin "; then going on to say that the servant does not enjoy a permanent status, because it is "the Son that abideth forever." Since the Son has a permanent status, anyone who is identified with the Son will have a permanent status with the Father because of Him. Jesus of Nazareth admitted the validity of their claim that they were Abraham's seed. This would be true naturally because of their biological descent from Abraham, but it would not be true spiritually because of their conduct. In his letter to the Romans Paul expressed this truth plainly when he wrote:

" . . . For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed " (Romans 9:6-8).

Again in his letter to the Galatians Paul dwells on this truth as you will find in Galatians chapter 4:22, 23, 28.

"For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bond-woman was born after the flesh; but he of the free-woman was by promise . . . Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise" (Galatians 4:22, 23, 28).

Paul is laboring the point here that just because they were of the flesh descendants of Abraham did not mean that they were in the promise, and that they were to be counted as the children of Abraham in the sight of God.

There could be confusion as the mind seeks to understand how persons who are admittedly the descendants of Abraham after the flesh may not be counted as His children in terms of the Covenant. One principle in mind will help to clarify the seeming contradiction. The Covenant with Abraham based on

the promise of God is spiritual, whereas the flesh descendants of Abraham are natural. And what all this would mean to us ordinarily would be seen in that a child might well be born in the home of an elder of the church, but that would not mean that the child was a Christian. From there on you can go in any direction you want to in your understanding. Just because my parents are believers will not make me a believer, and if my parents are unbelievers, it will not condemn me to unbelief. Each person comes before God in himself.

So we are brought face to face again with this profound truth: it is they who walk in the ways of Abraham that are the children of Abraham: even as it is they who walk in the ways of God, obeying His will as revealed in His Word, that are the children of God.

Paul makes use of this same principle in challenging professing Jews to admit their sinfulness. So he writes in the book of Romans in chapter 2, verses 28-29 these words:

"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Romans 2:28-29).

As we are studying this passage we could profitably use this truth in our own self examination. There seems no doubt that the fortunes of the Gospel witness amongst us are often seriously hindered by those who say they are believers and want to be counted as Christians, but are not: their own works refuting their own claims.

Thus we are brought again to our Scripture to see how the argument went between Jesus of Nazareth and the Jews who were confronting Him. Jesus of Nazareth pointed out:

"I know that ye are Abraham's seed (physical, biological); but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father" (John 8:37-38).

Although the designated passage of Scripture ends with this verse, its meaning cannot actually be realized without the completion of the argument which continues through verse 47 as I read to you.

When the Jews claimed in response to the presentation by Jesus of Nazareth "Abraham is our father," they were told bluntly by Him "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father." At this point the Jews became even more bold in their claims: "Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God." And now Jesus of Nazareth is even more definite in His indictment of their wicked opposition:

"Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (John 8:42-44).

It is sobering to realize that Jesus of Nazareth sought no reconciliation, he sought no basis of compromise, in this discussion. Many people will assume that because He was such a kind person, and so meek and so gentle, He would just get along with everybody. The word is "No!" He will not get along with people who disobey God. It is sobering to realize, I repeat, that Jesus of Nazareth sought no reconciliation with these people, no basis of compromise with these people. He was perfectly willing to draw the line, and cut down at this point. When the issue at stake involves the very essence of the Gospel there can be no compromise. At whatever risk of being considered hardheaded the exponent of the Gospel cannot leave the impression that the terms of deliverance can be negotiated. No! no!! no!!! You can be delivered if you are in Christ: but if you are not in Christ, no!

A popular doctrine commonly spoken of as "The Fatherhood of God" is directly challenged by this Scripture we have been studying. It has been broadly promoted and widely claimed that God is the

Father of all men. Simply to state this claim is enough to realize how it contradicts so much that is in the Gospel. Without any further argument the Bible student needs only to think through this portion of John we have been reading to realize that such a generalization as to say that God is the Father of all men, is in direct contradiction of the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth.

To be sure God created all men when He created Adam in the image of God. And God provides for all men in His bounty, so that what man needs for living can be found in his natural environment which God in His providence has provided. It is true that in His benevolence God commonly overrules in His Providence to "temper the wind to the shorn lamb" – that is all true and it is to the glory of God. No doubt "the goodness of God endureth forever." But all this taken together, or any part or parts of God's control of nature, does not make Him the Father of all.

God is the Father of Jesus of Nazareth in a special unique sense. Jesus of Nazareth was the only begotten Son of God. And then John tells us:

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13).

The born again believer is a child of God in a special blessed way.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God . . ." (I John 3:1-2a).

Our whole study has emphasized not only that born-again believers who walk in the ways of God are His children in a unique sense, but also that being the children of God, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, they are now completely set free from the powers of sin. They are free – free to do the will of God!!!

The Guild of the Knotted Towel

The Scripture we are now to study is the 13th chapter of John. There is a sense in which this is the beginning of private instruction, when the Lord is speaking directly to His own disciples about matters that belong especially to them. If it were possible one would do well to come into a separate classroom or into a room in your own home by yourself and shut the door, closing the believers in for a private conference with the Lord, and shutting the whole world out since unbelievers would have no part in what is being set forth here. Whatever we have to say will be said to the believers. And while we do not want to be unkind about it, it is very important for us to have this in mind. We would do well also to have in mind that if the person who is hearing us, listening, sharing, in this whole meditation and discussion, is not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, then these words have no direct bearing on that person.

There is no one topic that can serve to direct our thinking about this chapter. It is more of a definite situation in which a number of important ideas are revealed. The prescribed title will serve to bring to our mind that this whole situation is what it is, because the disciples, whom the Lord is preparing for their living in this world without His personal visible presence, are here and are to be taught. The disciples could focus their attention upon Him any time, but especially now when He is there with them as He moved among them, this would be the case. The Lord would have in mind that these disciples were going to live in this world after His physical presence was gone. So He was preparing them for that experience.

As we begin reading and studying this chapter we are told at least two important truths about the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The first thing that you will notice when we read here is that He was aware that the time had come for Him to leave this world. Let me read these few verses:

"Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of the world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (John 13:1).

That is the way it reads. There are many things that the Lord Jesus Christ did not know that His Father had in His own authority. For example, Jesus of Nazareth did not know the time of His return. He knew He was coming back, but He did not know when. He said about that: "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not even the Son, which the Father hath set in His own authority." But here we see that He did know about the hour of His departure from this world, that it was near. He knew too that the Father had given all things into His hands. He was aware of His authority; He knew that He had it, and that the Father was waiting for Him to take action. He knew too that He was come from God, and went to God.

When Jesus of Nazareth faced the situation that He was facing at this particular time, He did not come to any conclusions because of the circumstances around Him, or because of the situation as it was or because of the difficulties or the dangers that there were. No. It was because of His Father. He knew He was come from God, and He knew He was going back to God. That gave meaning to everything that was happening. He also knew, as we shall see as we study in this chapter, that one of His own would betray Him. And this saddened Him beyond measure. His soul was exceeding sorrowful when He knew that He knew who it was. He knew that Judas Iscariot would betray Him. And we find in this chapter that He knew that Peter would deny Him before the morning. He knew that this also would be true.

Yet He maintained His course in steady fashion. He went straight ahead with what He was going to do, though He knew these things. He did not let His personal feelings sway His conduct or His judgment. He expected to be taken by the authorities and put to death, but He knew that God would raise Him from the dead, and that He would eventually rule over all.

In the second place what we learn about Jesus of Nazareth in this passage is that having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end. In line with the New Testament use of the word "love" we understand that this meant that He did things for these disciplines to help them. The word "love" is not specially emphasizing His feelings: it does not particularly imply that He felt specially tender about this one or that one. No, He knew their need, knew what the situation was, and He knew what He could do, and He was going to share what He had with them. The word "love" is an action word that implies He was going to do something for them.

The whole chapter can be seen as a record of what Jesus of Nazareth did for His disciples because He loved them. He meant to do them well. He knew that He would soon leave them, and He wanted them to have a practical grasp of the situation they would be facing, so that they would find it easier to be faithful to Him.

Looking ahead into the chapter we see that He demonstrated to them how they should live with each other. Each would have some blemishes that could impair their living and their obedience to Him and their witness. Some of their fellow disciples could recognize these blemishes, and then take steps to remove the blemishes from their public testimony. He showed to His disciples that one of them would betray Him. You will remember that brought upon them a great personal examination, self-examination for each one. He showed them later that they would all forsake Him. This was a surprise to them, and you will remember Peter would not believe it; but it was true. He taught them to love one another and we shall see when we come to that part of the chapter how He put it into so many words. And He told them that this loving one another would be their distinctive trait. By this all men would know that they were His disciples because they cared for each other and did for each other. And all this was done because He loved them. He wanted to help them.

And so we see that it is helping a person when you instruct him and when you warn him of dangers and warn him of his personal weakness and guide him in what he is doing and make him strong by leading him into fellowship with others. All of that would indicate that the person who is in charge even to the point of checking up on their performance, is actually doing things on behalf of the others, loving them.

As we go on in our study, we are given insight into the heart of Judas Iscariot. I think it is worthy for us to take time to take an actual look at this whole incident from the point of view of this man. Looking now in verse 2 in chapter 13, we read:

"And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him."

As I have studied about this and thought about this in the course of my lifetime as a believer in the Lord and seeking to serve Him, I have many, many times been interested in and sometimes actually intrigued by, and many times warned by, what happened with Judas Iscariot. Just now I would make this comment. I personally doubt that Judas had long intended to betray his Lord. I do not think so. I do not think Judas ever had in mind that he was going to try and make money out of this. But I do think Judas in all of his fellowship with the Lord had not yielded his heart entirely to his Lord.

In verse 21 we read about Jesus of Nazareth that He was troubled in spirit. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." And you will remember the very next verse says "Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake." And I can't help but be greatly impressed by this. No one suspected Judas. Nobody had any idea that he was the one. Then in verse 27 we read: "And after the sop Satan entered into him." This seems to be an advance in his experience. At this point Satan took possession. Apparently Satan had not been in Judas all the time. Satan had not been in control of Judas all of the time.

Other inferences seem to verify that Judas had been honest in his performance. I am hoping it will be helpful to you to get that picture. The reason I am bringing it to your mind is that what I think happened to Judas could happen to a good man. It could happen to a man who was with the Lord. All in the world that would be involved would be that I were holding something out from the Lord. If there is some aspect of my life I have not yielded to Him, I am in danger, in real danger. Someone may ask, "What makes you think that Judas was an honest man?" I have a number of things in mind that can be simply put forth, so that anyone of you can see. Judas was treasurer of the company. Somehow or other the disciples lived right close together. Judas' handling of the money would be known to all his brethren, they were right down there with him. Somehow or other I have the idea that any man who would be entrusted by eleven other Jews to handle the money, would have an honest record. I really think Judas had.

I am not at all sure about Judas. I know that John does later have this comment about him, that Judas made a certain comment about Mary of Bethany when she anointed the feet of the Lord with such precious ointment, such costly perfume. Judas pointed out that this perfume could have been sold and the money given to the poor. John goes on to say that Judas said this not because he was interested in the poor, but because he held the bag. This simply means to me that Judas loved money. He would have liked to have gotten his hands on it. And this is what is always an unfortunate weakness. This was where he was vulnerable. Judas loved money. Someone will say "John said he was a thief." Yes, and it now comes to a point where we have to ask one another a very simple question: "When is a thief? Who is a thief?" You may well say "A thief is a man who steals." I would not doubt that, but what was he before he stole? Was he an honest man? If he had been an honest man before he stole, he would not have stolen. Actually he was a thief at heart all the time. This is the way it goes with a man. It will always be a problem to any student. How could anybody who had been three years with the Lord Jesus Christ, how could anybody like that betray Him for thirty pieces of silver? How would it be possible? The fact is that it is possible, when you have a person who has a certain love for money that he has never yielded, when a man has never given this love for money over to the Lord. This is the way it probably was with Judas. At any rate we know about this man Judas that on this night he was recognized and the Lord told him to go and do what he had to do.

We are also shown in this chapter how a servant should act. The Lord Himself illustrated this.

"Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded" (John 13:3-5).

This was not an unusual practice. Jesus of Nazareth was not doing something that seemed strange as such to them. In a well appointed home, where there were servants, the matter of rinsing the guests' feet, the person who had walked in barefoot sandals on dusty roads (they had no pavement in those days), such a person's feet would be grimy. When on a hot day the servant would come with a basin and rinse the visitor's feet so that the dust and grime of the heated road would be washed off, it would be a very cooling, refreshing experience. And actually the washing of the disciples' feet would be very much like a person today bringing another person a glass of ice water. It would be something refreshing for the visitor to have. This is what He began to do. Of course it was a menial task. It was the kind of a task that the lowest of the servants would be assigned to do. But it was an ordinary task, and a common thing to be done. This is what He did. He took the place of an ordinary common servant.

"So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:12-17).

I remember some years ago a student at the seminary was preaching on the nature and the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He was talking about Jesus of Nazareth being a servant. He made out that the Lord Jesus customarily did this thing, taking the place of some lowest servant. Some time ago I saw a play in which He was pictured as taking the place of some person engaged in a lowly task of life, and taking it with humility and being found as that person. All of this is misrepresenting the truth. The Lord Jesus Christ never was a servant. He did say "I am among you as he that serveth." He acted the way in which a servant would act, but in this passage I read to you you have it plainly stated "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am." He never was anything else but that. And what makes this incident so meaningful is that He as Lord and Master did not hesitate to act in the place of a servant. He was willing to take that place. He said to His disciples that if they wanted to be great, the way to be great was that the one who wanted to be the greatest, was to serve the one that was the least. We are shown also in this section how very necessary the washing is. And that comes out with what happened to Peter.

The Lord Jesus was going from one disciple to another rinsing his feet, washing his feet.

"Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all" (John 13:6-10).

But there is more truth in this particular verse: John 13:10. This can be better understood if one remembers the fact that in the original language different Greek verbs are used. If the passage were transliterated carefully it would be something like this: "He that is bathed, does not need to rinse anything but his feet. He is clean every whit." The idea was that if a person had gone to a public bathhouse where people went to bathe, when he finished bathing he would have to walk home. As a person walked home over the dusty road, his feet would get dusty. When he reached home he would not need to bathe himself all over again, he would rinse only his feet. That is the additional meaning of that particular passage. But I am interested in the way in which the Lord pressed upon them the idea that this was needed. The traveller needed his feet to be washed because they were dusty and grimy. The Lord Jesus gave an example which implies that

believers should do this to each other. Believers do the washing. But that is not all that is involved. What He is emphasizing is not so much that believers do the washing, but that believers must allow themselves to be washed. That is to say, I must let the other believer cleanse me. That means to say, I must let the other man point out those things in me that are not as they ought to be.

We are also shown in this passage that one of His own should betray Him. Toward the end of the passage the record is:

"When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. Then the disciples looked on one another, doubting of whom he spake" (John 13:21-22).

In other Gospel accounts we read that each one asked Him, "Lord is it I?" This does two things for me: for one thing, it shows the humility of these disciples. When they were told that one of the group would deny the Lord, each man had the immediate feeling it might be him, rather than anyone else. In their humility, each one would have considered that he was personally the most likely to betray his Lord. No one suspected Judas.

In the latter part of this chapter a new commandment is shown, and this is worth looking at.

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another" (John 13:34). In what sense would this be a new commandment? When the Lord Jesus was asked about these things you will remember He identified the first commandment "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." But here we come to a new commandment, which in a sense would be the third commandment. "That ye love one another." In what sense would this be new? Because there is here a new relationship. Everyone has a relationship with God and so he should love God. Everyone has a relationship with other people: they are his neighbors. Those who are in need, he should help. But now the believers have a special relationship with each other, they are brethren of each other as no one else is. In this fellowship of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, they all should love one another. Each of the believers should be acting in order to help his fellow believer. And in this way he would be carrying out the will of the Lord.

The Assurance of Hope

As we continue in our study of the Gospel of John, today we will be thinking about the assurance of hope. So much depends upon hope. Paul in the book of Romans says that "we are saved by hope." Most of us would agree, that when hope is gone, when expectation is gone, people's hearts fail them. "My people perish for lack of vision." Vision points forward very much like hope.

We might ask ourselves "What do we mean by hope?" The word "hope" refers to a confident expectation of an awaited promise, something is going to happen. Thus I believe what I was told, and now I am waiting for it to happen. The way in which I wait, my mood at that time, is called "hope."

We should keep in mind that this message, based upon the 14th chapter of John, is for believers only. Of course, we are glad to tell anybody in the world that "whosoever will may come." But we do not want to minimize the fact, we do not want to overlook the fact, that if they do not come, they are not in. If they want to come, they may. "Whosoever will may come, whosoever cometh, he will in no wise cast out." But this does not change the fact that if they do not come, they are not in, and they do not belong.

This message is for believers only. We mean by believers, in this case the disciples, those who had been with the Lord. There is no such thing as a person being a believer who does not know the Lord. Those disciples had been with the Lord: they had heard Jesus of Nazareth teach, and they had seen Him at work. These are the people who are now being talked to and being referred to in John chapter 14. Over

and over again in this chapter the Lord gives definite assurance to His people. We begin with these very famous words in the first four verses that I expect are known all around the world wherever the Gospel is known.

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way he know" (John 14:1-4).

As a pastor I have been very, very glad these words are available when we have a funeral service. At the same time, I am very, very sorry to think that anybody would leave these words only for funeral services. They were not spoken for that reason. They were spoken for daily living. In this passage believers are given assurance about the future, about the outcome. "I go to prepare a place for you . . . I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Every believer can have this in mind.

Now we pass on from this to the next portion of this chapter.

"Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father" (John 14:5-9)?

How often the heart cries out for assurance. If I only knew for sure! Even today I talked long distance with a believer who called to see if I could help. This particular person is distressed with the feeling that in spite of everything that she has heard, believed and done; she is being beset with fears that it just does not matter. How often we want assurance. Even the apostles who had been with the Lord for some three years could say to Him, "We know not whither thou goest and how can we know the way?" And then heard from the Lord Jesus these words: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Now we should notice how He uses the word "Father." "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." If you were to go out on any starlit night and look up into the starry heavens you could know, "the heavens declare the glory of God, the firmament showeth his handiwork." You could look at nature, you could look at the creation; and by just looking at it you could see a great deal about the wisdom and power of God; but you would never know about Him as Father. You would not know about Him as Father unless you see that Jesus of Nazareth was His Son; and that in and through Jesus Christ, believers can be His children. This must have been in Philip's mind when he said, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." It seems as though Philip felt he would like to just one time see for sure. The Lord said to him, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." To understand God the Father, one must recognize Christ Jesus, the Son. This is laying emphasis upon the fact that we are thinking about God, not only as Creator and as Keeper and as Judge and as Savior, and He is all of that; but God as Father. The heart can respond to the truth that I, you, any other believer, belong to Him as a son belongs to a father. This gives you assurance about God in Christ. In this way we are reminded that you can be strengthened in your personal relationship with Him. As we read on we see how the Lord Jesus is talking to them about their faith and about having assurance.

"Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (John 14:10-14).

"Believe me for the very works' sake." Notice how the Lord Jesus help His followers; He does not leave the challenge for their faith to His bare words. When you stop to think about who He is, it would be enough for Him to say it, you could believe it! But He does not leave it there. "Believe me for the very works' sake. I am asking you to put your confidence in Me. Have this in mind that the very works that you have seen happen now, there will be more than that happen. Greater works than these shall he do." How can you do greater works than He did? Consider this example: He lived in this world for some thirty-odd years and His public ministry was about 3 years long. How many souls would you say were actually won to God during that time? Paul says in writing to the Corinthians that the Lord Jesus appeared to about 500 brethren at once. You will remember the story in the book of Acts that on the Day of Pentecost when Peter preached 3,000 people believed. There never was a time when 3,000 people believed the words of Jesus of Nazareth. And later, in that Early Church 5,000 people believed. Recently I read a report of some work that has been going on in other parts of the world where 40,000 to 80,000 people had come to faith in the matter of two years' time. That is greater work. It does not mean that it was more spectacular. But whatever you think is great, He said "greater works than these shall he do."

"And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do." This is a way in which the Lord is strengthening us to give assurance about our trust in Him. "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it." Consider what it means to say "in His Name." This may not be a perfect way, but it may be helpful to any student. How does a child get its name? It was born that way. So one way in which a believer could have the name of Christ is to be born again. When you think about partners in business, you may have a particular name, "the Brown Company": and who can sign for the Brown Company? The partners can use the name "the Brown Company." And so it can be felt that co-workers would be in His Name. Any girl has her name changed when she is married. The believer can think of himself as being a member of the Bride and then he will have the name of the Bridegroom. So taking all these figures of speech: born again, a co-worker with Him, and a member of His Bride, a believer can understand. "If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it." This gives assurance about trust in Christ to the believer.

Going on from here we will notice in verses 16-17 assurance about my daily living. This is one thing I can have when He promises the coming of the Holy Spirit. Look at these words:

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:16-17).

This is to be daily, and this is assurance about my daily living.

Next we come to the assurance of His constant presence. In verses 18-19 it is written: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you." The Greek language in which this was written used these words: "I will not leave you to be orphans. I am not going to leave you alone. I will come to you." "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also." It is clear from these words the assurance of His presence is not because of my virtue, nor my strength. It is not because I am so good and it is not because I am so strong and it is not because I know so much. He will be with me because of Himself. He has promised to come. As surely as I believe in Him and put my trust in Him, I can depend upon His words, "I will come to you."

In verses 20-21 we have assurance about God the Father.

"At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:20-21).

The believer is going to be really favored, not because of anything he has earned but because of what God will do. God will come and have fellowship with him.

In verses 22-24 there is assurance about the believer's relationship with God. They asked Him:

"Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" He went on to say "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." So the believer has this assurance that just as surely as he responds to the Word of God, and just as surely as he takes it for himself and trusts it and believes it, he will find that Almighty God, the Father, as well as the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son, will come to dwell with him. This means he will never be left alone.

In verses 25-26 there is set forth assurance about my future understanding.

"These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:25-26).

Isn't that marvelous! Isn't that wonderful! I will come to know things not by research, or reason, but by revelation. It will be given to me. I can remember it will be given to me, which is a way of saying this: I will find that deep down in my heart I will just know this is so. I may not have a long series of reasons but in Him I am inwardly strengthened to be able to believe this is to be so.

When the Lord went on talking to His disciples He gave them assurance about tomorrow. How natural it is for any of us to wonder and to worry about tomorrow! But we should listen to Him:

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I" (John 14:27-28).

This Scripture gives me to know that I can have assurance about tomorrow, He is really going to be with me.

Our study in this chapter comes to a conclusion with assurance about my confidence in Him, that my confidence in Him will be strengthened.

"And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe" (John 14:29).

The Lord was concerned about His disciples, that they should be steadfast through the crises that would occur when He was put to death and separated from them. Thus He goes on to say:

"Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence" (John 14:30-31).

In other words Jesus said now that He was going to go on in to these people, they would destroy Him, they would put Him to death. They would bury Him, but He would rise from the dead; because Almighty God would see to that. And the Lord would do all this so that you and I could have confidence in Him. This wonderful chapter concludes with a very practical utterance: "Arise, let us go hence." Because all of these things will be made sure by the living Lord Jesus Christ.

The Nature of the Unity We Seek

The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ tells of the salvation work of God. The human being in sin is naturally doomed to destruction, and so has no outlook but death and doom. Burdened with guilt and without strength, he is lost. No wonder it is such a common thing among man-kind to try and live down

here forever, because as bad as it may be, it is not as bad as it is going to be for them when they go there to be judged.

However in John 3:16 we get the marvelous truth: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." That is remarkable! God gave His Son to redeem and to save whosoever will come unto Him. Salvation is not merely a matter of the debt being paid and the guilt being removed so that a person can have a new start, a second chance to do better. Salvation means that the believer will be delivered, will be set free in Christ. The believing soul will be united with Christ to share in Christ's eternal life.

We find these ideas set forth in the Gospel according to John in chapters 15 and 16. In chapter 15 in the first eight verses we see the unity that a believer shares in Christ is operational, i.e. functional. The unity that the believer shares in Christ is effective in him. It works in him. In this passage you will see such statements as "Abide in me, and I in you," and then "I am the vine, ye are the branches." The Lord goes on to say, "For without me (that is apart from me) ye can do nothing." He brings to mind a branch that is broken off a tree will wither. The relationship must be actual and continuous. As a branch is in a vine that is the way in which it is possible to live in Christ. The Lord goes on to say:

"If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are bummed. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit" (John 15:6-8).

When I am going through that passage I am encouraged to remember a fruit tree. Perhaps you think of an apple tree or of a peach tree, the example will be the same. An apple tree has a trunk with main branches, and then smaller branches; finally it grows out to where there are just twigs. Now I am going to ask you, "Where does the fruit form?" And don't pass it by too easily when I point out to you, the apple does not grow on the trunk of the tree. The fruit does not form on the main branches of the tree. You know where the fruit forms? On the twig. You may feel that you do not amount to much, you may have a feeling deep down in your heart that you really do not count. You are just a twig in the whole tree. But I want to tell you something, you are the one on which the fruit appears. There is no such thing as a person living on his own, in his own strength, by his own understanding and his own purpose, and then bearing fruit in the Lord. No. He cannot bear fruit in himself. The way that one can stand in the Lord is to let the Lord work in you and through you, to do His will He summed it all up when He made the remark: "For without me (separated from me) ye can do nothing."

As we read on in verses 9 to 17 in this 15th chapter, we see that this unity is established in love. The Lord Jesus says "Continue ye in my love." And then He makes a statement that is very significant to us: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love." Christ's love for me resulted in that He died for me. My love for Christ will result that I obey Him. The word "love" always implies action in it. There has to be something done. Christ loved me: He died for me. I love Him: I obey Him. "That my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Then the Lord makes this comment: "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." He goes on to point out for us, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." And then the Lord says something that is really humbling and sobering as well as uplifting. "I have called you friends . . . I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit." Here is the real meaning of the word "ordination": set aside for a service, equipped for a service. "I have chosen you, I am the one that called you and I ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit."

This is an amazing relationship. Imagine over us all is God. God loved us and gave His Son to die for us: God wants us to love one another. We should open our hearts and love Him! All through scripture it is brought out again and again that such a thing as loving God without loving one another is impossible. When a believer has it in heart and mind that he is not going to serve himself, but others, the first thing for him to do is to lift his eyes and serve God. This cannot be emphasized too much. It might well be some-

one will say that the believer should want to serve God so that he should serve others – I don't mind. And it may be that deep down in a person's heart he will need to have God in mind before he can serve others. If God calls, and God places before you a person or area of service, remember that every human being is a creature of God. God made all men and God cares about all men, and if we have the living water of life, God would have us share it with the thirsty souls round about us. We will just have to do that. It will often follow that then we have a greater joy than we ever knew before when we have served God in serving others.

In chapter 15:18-25 we see that this unity is shared in a common rejection by the world. That is a rather interesting aspect in our relationship with God. Because we belong to Him and because He has given His name to us, what happens to Him, happens to us. Jesus of Nazareth said: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18). In using the word "world " we should keep in mind the Scripture in I John 2:16, "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." When you say "the lust of the flesh," you can use the word "appetite." When you think of "the lust of the eyes," you can think of "imagination." And when you think of "the pride of life," you can just settle for the word "pride." It is well recognized that appetite, imagination and pride are not in favor of Jesus of Nazareth. These desires are not in favor of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus Christ would lead a believer away from each one of those things.

"I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19). The word "hate" does not need specially to emphasize or require a bitter, virulent, aggressive animosity, hate in the sense of someone scowling and being furious. The word "hate" is used as over against the word "love." Of course it often leads to the very things I have described, but it does not necessarily start that way. A person stands up for the Lord Jesus Christ. There are people who will draw back. These are they who do not join with the believers, and the Apostle John would say "they hate you."

In His remarks of Jesus of Nazareth encouraged His disciples by telling them "The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you . . . He that hateth me hateth my Father also" (John 15:20, 23). Then He went on to say "They hated me without a cause" which is a way of preparing His followers for the fact that people will turn against anyone who works for the Lord. How would a person work for the Lord? He could invite people to church, offer them tracts about spiritual experience, suggest that they read a book that has to do with serving the Lord. He could bear his personal witness and testimony. He could just make it a point that he is going to go to church on Sunday. He could just make it a point that he would go to prayer meeting on Wednesday night. He could make it a point that he would honor the Bible above other books. Such a person will find a great many people dropping away. They may not openly attack him or anything like that, but they will not be with him. And then they may even do things that are contrary. They may not even know why, but they are just not for that witness for Christ. "They hated me without a cause." They had no reason to do so, but they did. The world is not an organized community that is led and directed like an army. It is a frame of mind. It is a mood, and such people are given over to doing what they like, getting what they want, and building everything up in themselves. Such persons just do not like, they are not in favor of anybody who comes in and says that the thing to do is to deny yourself. They do not like that.

In John 15:26-27 this unity is shown in a common witnessing. This unity that we have with the Lord is shown in a common witnessing to the world. Jesus of Nazareth told them that the Spirit of truth "shall testify of me." He will testify of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then the Scripture is "And ye also shall bear witness."

The Holy Spirit witnesses of Jesus Christ. How will the Holy Spirit witness to the world? Primarily in the Scriptures. That is the Word of God and the Holy Spirit has inspired that Word. The Holy Spirit will also use persons. This cannot be seen so clearly because we never know for sure what is really in the heart of anybody who is doing anything publicly.

Believers also witness of Jesus Christ when they join the church. The fact that you unite in prayer, have Bible study, go to prayer meeting and witness all these things indicate plain enough that you believe in Christ.

In the 16th chapter we see that this unity with Christ is shared in a common rejection by religious persons. The Lord Himself said to His disciples "They shall put you out of the synagogues." There will be a disposition, there will be a widespread attitude to get rid of believers. "Yes, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." Now of course we have laws against killing people. You cannot restrain gossip. We do not have any laws or any protection against such as will make snide remarks about people. In many congregations, among those who are gathered together in the name of the Lord, the spirit will prevail that will be against those who speak out openly for Jesus Christ. If believers will speak out about the Lord Jesus and will bring in what He would say, then they will find that there will be those who actually have a feeling that when they get such believers out of the church, they have done well. "Whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." Then He went on to say, "And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you." When the disciples first started following Jesus of Nazareth He did not talk this way. But as time went on, He felt it was important and now He knew it was necessary that they should know what they were facing.

John 16:7-11 is a very important passage. This unity with Christ is demonstrated in presenting the ministry of the Holy Spirit to the world. I am going to urge you to read this because I think that it is so very meaningful to us.

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged" (John 16:7-11).

This is very, very important. Does the preaching you hear promote holiness? As that man preaches, do you become more conscious of sin? Are you aware of the fact that God is seeing you as you live? Does this preaching promote virtue? Does he make you feel you would love to do the right thing? And does this preaching give you an expectation that one day you will meet God who will judge you? Their existence, their eternal being, is not at stake but their conduct is being reviewed. Whether the work has been wood, hay, stubble or whether it has been gold, silver, precious stones will all come out in the fire of judgment at that time when we stand before Him. And when I listen to preaching, or when I preach because it happens that in my life now I hear myself more often! than I hear others, because of the very program which I am following, I ask myself this: as I was preaching and teaching people, was I conscious of sin? Did I realize how sin can alienate a man from God? Did I realize how subtle sin is? Am I conscious of the importance of righteousness, that he that doeth right is right and that there is a thing that is right with God and a thing that is wrong with God? And am I conscious of the fact that I am going to meet the Lord and stand before Him as I am? The Holy Spirit will arouse these thoughts. And believers will be joined with the Lord Jesus Christ in this relationship before the world.

In John 16:12-15 we see that this unity with Christ is involved in understanding the truth. The Lord says "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. " One could say "Why? How would they be able to bear them later?" The answer would be because later the Holy Spirit would be with them and the Holy Spirit will help them. He would guide them into all truth: He would not speak of Himself. Because of this it is actually true that the most spiritual people are not the people who speak about the Holy Spirit more than anyone else; the more spiritual people are those who speak about Jesus Christ more than anyone else. When we use the word "more" we are making comparisons. The evidence to me of my spirituality is not so much what I think about the Holy Spirit, as what I think about the living Lord. Here is the evidence of the Spirit working in me.

As we read on in this chapter we can see that this unity makes possible sharing the resurrection of

Christ. Jesus of Nazareth made this comment to them: "A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father." He said these things to them while He was still here in this world. And it was puzzling to them because they did not know what was going to happen, but He knew. He knew that they were seeing Him now a little while, and then He would be put on the cross and put in the grave and they would not see Him. But then He would be raised from the dead and they would see Him because of God's plan. "Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned to joy." This experience of suffering will come again and again and again, but the experience of resurrection from the dead is also available. "Your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

In the closing part of this chapter Christ Jesus has something to say that is good for us all. This unity will be manifested in answers to prayer. "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you . . . ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." When I was preparing this, I put in the margin of my notes, "Do we actually utilize this privilege." Do we ask that we might receive, so that our joy might be full? Finally, the unity that we have with Christ will be demonstrated by victory. "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." And how does He overcome the world? By dying in the flesh. The world could not reach Him anymore. It is in the flesh that I have appetite, that I have my imagination, and that I have my pride, but if I will reckon my flesh to be dead, then the world cannot reach me and I can be raised into the newness of life.

Jesus' Prayer for the Church

The subject of this particular study, as it is listed, is "Jesus' Prayer For The Church." And I feel that I just must, out of my own feeling for my own witness and testimony for my own sake, take exception to that title. I do not ever like to take the name "Jesus" as it stands alone. I know that it is that way in the Gospel, but I would draw your attention to the fact that it is very rarely that way in the epistles, because Jesus of Nazareth has been glorified since the events recorded in the Gospels. He was raised from the dead, brought into the presence of His Father, and God "has made that same Jesus both Lord and Christ." I do sometimes have to use the name and when I do I usually say "Jesus of Nazareth." But the reason why the title of this study is really not acceptable is not so much that alone, but actually this is not the prayer of a human being.

John 17 is not the prayer of Jesus of Nazareth as such, as a human being. A suggestion that would indicate the truth better to us would be to call it "the Prayer of the Son of God for His own." When Jesus of Nazareth was looking up into the face of His Father in the presence of His disciples, He was distinctly the Son of God, and He was praying for His own.

The word "church " does not occur in the chapter. So why introduce it? We will see here as we begin reading in chapter 17 that the prayer is "glorify thy Son by giving them eternal life."

"These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent" (John 17:1-3).

To be sure God is everywhere, but do not miss this. He "lifted up his eyes to heaven." I know that God is everywhere and certainly Jesus of Nazareth knew it. But the gesture of lifting up His eyes seems to be proper. It would be that way anywhere in the world. "The hour is come." The moment of the showdown

is here now. We are moving right into the very crucial center of the whole affair of Jesus Christ and His salvation program. "Glorify thy Son." Bring out into the open what was in Him. What Jesus of Nazareth represented in Himself, the incarnate Son of God who came on a mission of mercy to save souls, makes salvation obvious. The hour has come now to reveal it to the whole world. "That thy Son also may glorify thee." That Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ might bring God's will to pass. "As thou has given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

That word "know" has so much more meaning in the way in which it was used in the Greek language than we can ever bring forth in our English way of using it. When we speak about "knowing" somebody, we mean that we are able to identify him, put a label on him. In that sense, we know that is John Brown over there and this is Jim Smith over here. That is not the meaning of the Greek word "know." "That they might know thee." That they might understand, appreciate, esteem, and be conscious of Who Thou really art. "That they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent."

Then He goes on to say in the next four verses something that can be helpful to us. The Son of God is saying to His Father:

"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me" (John 17:4-8).

This is the way Jesus of Nazareth referred to His disciples. Notice how this moves along. "I have glorified thee on the earth." Jesus of Nazareth did here among men what carried out the will of God and magnified the name of God. "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." It is interesting to see that there was far more true than Jesus of Nazareth Himself in His lifetime here on earth brought to pass. Far more true. Eternity had been going on, and eternity would go on. Jesus of Nazareth lived here just 33 years and in this time that He lived here, He did the great work that God sent Him to do. But God had been working long before, and God is working even now.

"I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." That to my mind is such an amazing statement. Because it definitely establishes the fact that Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnation of the Son of God, actually was the One who had been with the Father before the world was. God the Father Almighty, Jesus Christ His Son, and the Holy Spirit: as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Triune God, had been throughout all eternity. The fact that the Son of God came into this world to be incarnate, and that He was born of a virgin, that He lived in Palestine, suffered unto Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried, and then raised from the dead, is all incidental to the plan of God. God was before that and God is since then. And we are dealing with Almighty God. Jesus of Nazareth is here calling upon the Father to carry out His eternal purpose that He had had in mind. And He is reporting to His Father: "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee." He is bringing back to mind the fact that these disciples understood, because He kept telling them that what He was doing, and what He was showing them, and the way He was performing things, was God working in and through Him.

"For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me." It is so very, very important for the people, for those souls, who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to understand

that Jesus of Nazareth was the human form of the incarnate Son of God.

Notice these next words:

"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine" (John 17:9).

Some years ago it was my experience to be at a worship service when the ministry was conducted by a visiting minister. He had the title of "Bishop." I am not even sure to which particular communion he belonged. I remember that he made a point, a strong point, in his address that it was the will of God that all the world should be brought together to Him. He thought that the Christian church should come together. He labored this point, and it led him into various extra statements. One of these statements was to say that anybody that was not working to save the world, was not working to bring the world into the will of God, was actually disobeying God, and was actually an offense to God.

After the service was over, I went up to see him. After I had greeted him, I said, "I have something I want to say to you." He said, "Yes, what is it?" And I said, "Not guilty." He looked at me with surprise. "What do you mean?" I said, "You just now told us all that if we did not work for the salvation of the world, for the redemption of the world, by bringing the world together with the church to God that we were offending God, that we were actually sinning. I may possibly be sinning at one time or another, but not in this. And so I am simply making my plea 'not guilty.'" He got my point, but felt it was just my personal opinion. I said, "Not at all. Didn't you tell us that we ought to pray for the world, and didn't you right here in this service pray for the world?" And he said, "Yes." Then I quoted to him what the Lord Jesus said: "I pray for them: I pray not for the world."

This experience brought vividly into my own mind that so far as my responsibility in the world goes, I am to seek souls. So far as this world is concerned, I am not about to accept the idea that I am committed to save it. Nothing can save it! Actually so far as this world is concerned, "the heavens will pass away with a great noise and the elements will melt with fervent heat." That is the way Peter put it. The end of this world will result in a great cataclysm, a terrific catastrophe. The Christian ministry is not committed to the idea to prevent that catastrophe. We have a commission to save souls! We are to bring souls to God. And so He says here:

"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are" (John 17:9-11).

I remember how that passage was particularly stressed in the message that I had referred to earlier: "That they may be one, as we are." There are two different uses for the word "one." It can be used in a numerical sense i.e., you are speaking of one, two, three, the single individual incidents. Or you can use the word "one" in the sense of unity. Scripture aids us here. Speaking of husband and wife "they twain shall be one." The husband and the wife, the two of them, shall be one. Does that mean that there is just going to be one person? They are still husband and wife, and there are two of them. But the "one" is a term for unity. And that is the word here "that they may be one – in unity – as we are."

"While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept" (John 17:12).

We do not have too much of that described in the Gospels, but it is clear that the Lord Jesus watched over them as a shepherd watched over his sheep.

". . . And none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:12).

One of His own turned Him down, betrayed Him, as the Scripture had quoted.

"And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (John 17:13-15).

That is a wonderful thing! So far as you and I are concerned, we are here for our lifetime. In our lifetime here we will witness and we will seek to serve the Lord to His honor and glory. This is our task.

Our task will not be to change the circumstances round about us. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world." When we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ we are not translated right then into heaven; "but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." We are in the world, but He wants us to be kept from the evil. He says in verse 16: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

We read on in verse 17: "Sanctify them through thy truth." The word "sanctify" means to set aside for a special purpose. You know you can sanctify a vessel, or in common language you could sanctify a pail. If you use a pail with which you carry water, and set it aside for a particular purpose, it can be properly called "sanctified." I always think of how things were when I grew up in the little town where I went to high school. We did not have a fire department or water works. We had barrels of water standing in places where there were vulnerable spots, where fire might break out. The pails were placed beside them, and these pails were marked with the word "fire." And that meant that that pail was "sanctified" for that purpose. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." Just have this in mind that when you get to know what is in the Scriptures you are actually being set aside for God.

"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." We have the same mission now that He had then. "As my Father hath sent me, so send I you." The Lord Jesus came to seek and to save the lost; and you and I, if we are believers, have this same mission. This does not always lead us to a foreign land. This can happen at home, right where you live, when you are actually seeking to lead people to the Lord. "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." That always warms my heart. Did you see what I have just now said? The Lord Jesus praying says, "Neither pray I for these alone." I can think of Peter, James and John and Matthew and all the disciples. But the Lord is thinking of others. "But for them also which shall believe on me through their word." That lets me in. That brings you in. And right in that prayer He was praying for us.

"That they all may be one" – in unity in the Lord – "As thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." I cannot help but feel that it might be helpful to take this phrase, this word "unity," and look at it again for a moment. If you were going to ship, we will say, fruit such as grapes, do you realize that one way of shipping the grapes would be to have these individual grapes loose in a basket or a carton, and you would be able to handle them. Another way would be to take these grapes the way they grew, attached to a stem, and handle them in bunches. And if you picked up a bunch of grapes every grape is attached to the stem the way it grew. That is the way it could be with you and with me so far as the Lord is concerned. True we could belong to a whole company. We could be put together in a whole congregation or a whole church because we are in with all the rest of them. And we could belong to Him because we were born again in Him.

"And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:22-26).

We have read though with comment this remarkable section of this marvelous prayer of the Son of God, looking up into the face of His Father and praying for you and for me. He was praying for us that we might be kept by the power of God, in the will of God, in the Spirit of God, that we might have fellowship with Him that our joy might be full.

The Liberating Power of God

In this study we will be considering the liberating power of God. In recognizing the work that God does in setting a human soul at liberty, we must recognize the bondage that the human soul is in, the Deliverer who will actually effect the deliverance, the procedure by which He will be doing it, the cost that will be involved and the result that will follow. We will see all these things in our study which is based on the book of John in chapters 18 and 19.

Our attention will be focused upon Jesus of Nazareth; His trial, condemnation, crucifixion, burial and resurrection. The first elemental fact that we will notice is that the nature of the bondage of the human being did not appear in Pilate's courtroom. As Jesus of Nazareth stood before Pilate that problem was not what was being discussed. When we speak of liberation, we are not thinking of Jesus of Nazareth, we are thinking of all men everywhere. We are remembering how John wrote in his first epistle in chapter 2, verse 2: "And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Insofar as you and I want to share in the deliverance that has been made possible, we will need to appreciate that our sins were involved in our bondage. That bondage is involved in our sinful human nature. It is not merely a matter of guilt, it is a matter of being subject to sinful appetite, to imagination, to pride, which develops and has sway with us in the form of desires, thoughts, ambitions. Sin is lodged in the flesh. It is when the flesh dies that the person is free from sin. This is the very point in the whole delivering work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Deliverer is Christ, the Son of God. He came to set us free, to deliver us. In practical procedure He came to die in the flesh for us. I want to say right away that deliverance is not just a matter of dealing with the guilt. It is not a matter of taking away the end result of doom and condemnation. The deliverance is far closer to us than that. The deliverance is going to take place in us and we are to be set free from that which binds us, namely our flesh. So Christ Jesus, when He came to deliver us, came to die in the flesh for us. So it is said of Him that He was "the Lamb of God," namely His life was to be given as a ransom for us. He said Himself "For this was I born, to this end came I forth."

The procedure that was followed was for Christ to die in the flesh that I, the believer, might live forever. The idea was that by death He would destroy him that had. the power of death, namely, the devil. Christ would die for me that I might live through Him. He became sin for me, that I might become the righteousness of God through Him. I have just read it and I marvel, and am humbled.

This is all possible through faith, by committing ourselves to God through. faith on our part and the grace of God on His part. God is going to do it. You may not be able to understand it all, but you can rejoice in it and praise God for it. He sent His Son for you, to die for you, that you might be set free and delivered into the very life of God.

The cost of this whole deliverance is beyond our understanding. We can tell how it was indicated. We may say that it cost Him His life; but it is hard to grasp what that means, because He was the Son of God, He had eternal life. And it is hard to understand what that means. Gethsemane conveys some idea. As you think about Gethsemane, you can see for yourself that it would be a simple thing for the person who has not dwelt upon it, to see here a man who knows that He is going to be put to death and who

cringes before it. But it is not so simple as that. You know there have been many men, lesser persons than Jesus of Nazareth, who faced death with composure. Men have been able to die. Women have been able to die for the sake of other people without any hesitation. Then why would Jesus of Nazareth have any problem here? Because there was far more involved than there is when I die. Do you remember the passage of Scripture that says "He sweat as it were great drops of blood" (Luke 22:44)? That showed tension, inward tension, so terrific that His human body would probably not have been able to stand it. We read that an angel strengthened Him. I humbly before Almighty God bow my heart and my head and simply say that Christ Jesus did more for me than I can ever imagine. Whatever He shrank from is beyond my comprehension. Dying in the flesh could scarcely be that awful because He knew that He would not stay dead. You want to remember that when the Lord Jesus Christ came to die, He did not come to stay dead. He expected that on the third day to rise from the dead. But there was something involved there of separation from His Father that was so terrific and so awful that He needed strength from above to be able to endure it in his human form.

Now the result of what Christ Jesus did is our deliverance from sin. This deliverance is offered, and is available to all men and "whosoever will may come." We do not by any means think that it is going to be operative for people who do not come, No, no. The new life that is talked about in the Bible is the life of Christ in us. And the life of Christ in us, in itself, is free from sin. He never had sinned in Himself. That is the life that is to be in me, and insofar as I have in me the life of Christ and the eternal life of God, that inward prompting in me will never lead me into selfishness. It will never lead me into any kind of ambition and pride. It will lead me to yield myself to my Father in Heaven. That new life that is in me belongs to God. It is God's life and it turns back to Him. And that new life in me, in the believer, is free from Satan and his power. Satan approaches us through the flesh but when the flesh has been crucified, he has lost his contact point. He has no way of getting to us. Christ Jesus suffered in His body all that the devil could do, even unto death. But God raised Him from the dead. Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life. Here is the great truth of our deliverance. Through the death of Christ we are set free.

The death of Jesus Christ took place in this wise, and as you have it recorded in the book of John in the 18th chapter. In the first 13 verses you have the arrest of Jesus of Nazareth. You will note such things as this: Judas also knew the place. "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?" Jesus of Nazareth knew what was going to happen and He went right straight into it. When the soldiers of the Romans came to arrest Him, Judas also stood with them. I think it is right for us to stop there, to pause and ask ourselves "Whom do I stand with?" Judas stood with them.

"Whom do I stand with in reference to the Bible?" The people who criticize it? The people who ignore it? Or the people who receive and believe it and study it as the Word of God.

Whom do I stand with? Whom do I stand with in the matter of prayer? You know there are many people who do not pray. Am I one of them? There are many people in praying are only passing, as it were, a gesture toward God. Am I one of these? There are many people that in praying are asking only for something for themselves. Am I one of them? Sometimes I wish unto God that by the blessing of God I might kneel beside my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. That if I was going to stand in praying that I might stand beside Him who looked up into Heaven and talked to His Father.

Whom do I stand with in the matter of witnessing? You know there are many people who do not try to win anybody to the Lord. Am I one of them? "Judas also stood with them." And Jesus of Nazareth spoke up and said "I am he." "Whom seek ye? They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he." At this time occurred that incident, when Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and attacked as it were the whole Roman army. Whatever one may think about Simon Peter he should never be accused for any lack of courage, or any lack of loyalty to his Lord. He may have done some foolish things,

but there was nothing wrong with his heart. Remember how Jesus said to him, "Put up thy sword." And how then He said to Peter "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Jesus of Nazareth then said to Peter "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be" (Matt. 26:53-54)? It is here that I have the feeling in my heart this is where I come in. He was practically saying "How else can I save that school teacher up in Northern Manitoba, Canada, many many hundreds of years later. How could I ever do it if I do not right here and now suffer for him and take his place?" That is what He did. "Put up thy sword. That is not the way." Resisting: that is not the way to serve. Yielding: that is the way to serve. We should never think that yielding is a sign of weakness. It takes a much stronger person to willingly yield than it does to fight. Anybody can fight, but when a person's spirit is committed to God, and he yields, this is an evidence of the grace of God in his heart.

"Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him" (John 18:12).

The whole issue of the Gospel is briefly understood in this whole incident. It can be felt when Pilate asked the question: "What will I do then with Jesus, that is called Christ?"

In the 18th chapter of John in verses 14-27 the record shows Jesus of Nazareth in the high priest's court, the Jewish court. Caiaphas was the high priest. He asked Jesus about His doctrine, what He had been teaching. Jesus answered him, "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple . . . Why ask thou me? ask them which heard me."

This passage of Scripture also has a record of Peter's denial. Peter stood at the door outside the courtroom until John brought him in. Then as he was coming in, one of the girls standing there said, "Art not thou also one of this man's disciples?" Peter answered "I am not." Later, Peter stood and warmed himself by the fire that the soldiers had built in the early morning hours to take the chill off the air for themselves. There they turned to him and asked " Art not thou also one of his disciples?" He said "I am not." Then one of the servants who was kinsman of the man whose ear Peter cut off, said "Did I not see thee in the garden with him?" Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew. We should soberly take note that this good man, this real believer and this real servant of the Lord, stumbled here and fell at this point. I humbly ask Almighty God that I may be spared the times when I might stumble and fall.

In chapter 18, verses 28-40 Jesus of Nazareth is standing before Pontius Pilate. " Art thou the King of the Jews?" The Lord gave an answer I think we ought never to forget:

"My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born" (John 18:36-37).

Then Pilate came out and said to the people "I find in him no fault at all . . . will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews?" But the people astonished Pilate and confused him by asking for Barab-bas.

In chapter 19 in verses 1 to 16 is the record of how Jesus of Nazareth was condemned by Pilate. This was the second court that He had been in. He had been in the high priest's court where He was accused of blasphemy. There they found Him guilty of blasphemy, and in the Jewish law that was a crime that was punishable by death. But standing before Pontius Pilate He was accused of treason, and that in the Roman law was punishable by death. So Pilate conceded to the wishes of the people and yielded Him to their will. The story is all there. It is all involved in what is necessary to set us free. To set me free. I can remember that is what He did for me.

In chapter 19, verses 17-37 is the story of the crucifixion. This will not need any explanation. It is all well known to believing people, yet perhaps we should take a look at it. Here is the way it is recorded, and this is what happened. In chapter 19, verses 38-42 is the record of the simple account of the burial.

But in the burial of Jesus of Nazareth something happened that was the beginning of the dawn of a new day. Joseph of Arimathea, this layman, who really believed in Jesus of Nazareth, but did not openly confess Him because of the Jews, this layman came forward and openly identified himself with the crucified Lord. "Give me His body" as much as to say "He is mine. He is my Lord. Let me have Him." The body of Jesus of Nazareth was taken down and Nicodemus came with Joseph of Arimathea to bury Him. They brought many pounds of spices with which they embalmed Him temporarily. They wrapped Him in linen clothes and laid Him in Joseph's tomb. That is the price that was paid.

We have taken the time to go back over it again that we might have in mind all that was done to set the believer free, to set human beings free. The believer is set free from penalty. Does this mean if I believe I can go out and do the best I can in the future, I will be free from my consequences? No, no. This means I will be free inside. I will be free so that I will not need to yield to selfishness. I will not need to yield to pride. I will not need to yield to vanity. I have within my own heart and mind as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, functioning in me, the grace of God which will prompt me, move me, to deny myself, and to yield myself to God. And for this I can thank Him who died to set us free.