

SECRETS OF THE SPIRIT

by Ray C. Stedman

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THE TOWEL WEARERS

by Ray C. Stedman

These next few weeks we will be studying the passage ~~the Upper Room Discourse~~ the Gospel of John, Chapters 13 through 17. This passage takes us into the intimate thoughts of Jesus just before his crucifixion. Some have called this the holy of holies of Scripture. That is, if you think of Scripture as a temple, then this is the sanctuary, in which you come into the very presence of God himself. By means of his disciples, we are permitted here to enter into the thinking and emotions of Jesus just before his crucifixion. Within hours of this event

of a slave, girding himself with a towel.

"Then he poured water into a basin," just as in a few hours he was to pour out his own blood in blood which would be for the cleansing of human defilement, of human guilt of every kind and so pours water into the basin as a picture of that.

Then he "began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was picturing the very act of applying the cleansing of his own blood to human lives. And if you skip to you have the end of the parable. "When he had washed their feet, and taken his garments," he "re place," just as the writer of Hebrews records for us that "When he had made purification for sins at the right hand of the Majesty on high," {Heb 1:3 RSV}. Thus you have this remarkable, beautiful worked out for us, teaching us the meaning of his whole ministry.

{John 13:9 RSV}

"Lord, if that's the case, then by all means -- not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" In those words, he asked for a bath. Jesus had said earlier, "What I do now you don't understand." Peter waited a moment or two that he didn't understand what was happening. So Jesus corrects him again:

Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but he is clean all over;" {John 13:10a RSV}

And in those words he gives us a beautiful explanation of the process of salvation. It begins with our initial coming to Christ, in which we take the place of bankruptcy before him, coming without any of our own righteousness to offer, and allowing him to cleanse us, is likened to a bath in which we are washed over, completely, from head to foot. Jesus of course is alluding to a very common social practice of those days. It was the custom to take a bath before you went out to a meal. But in walking through the streets of the city with sandals on, your feet would be defiled. And so when you arrived as a guest, a servant would wash your feet. But you would not need to repeat the bath.

So Jesus is saying, "When you first come to me, you are bathed, you are clean all over." This is what the Bible calls "justification by faith." It is a washing away of all the guilt, all the defilement, and all the sin of the entire life -- past, present, and future. But as you walk through life, Jesus knows, there is defilement contracted in the feet, in the walk, and that needs to be washed away. Thus he teaches us that we only do we need that initial never-to-be-repeated cleansing, which washes us as a bath; but we need the many-times-repeated experience of forgiveness, of coming to Christ for the cleansing away of the defilement of our walk, and being forgiven again and again and again, over and over again. It is this which defines our relationship that we have a part with him.

In other words, the enjoyment of our relationship with Christ is lost when we are temporarily defiled by wrongdoing, by guilt and by sin, by attitudes which are wrong in our life. We lose the enjoyment of our relationship with him. His attitude toward us doesn't change, but our attitude toward him does. Through the Scriptures we are taught all through the Scriptures, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," {1 Jn 1:9 KJV}. And the moment we do so we are restored, i.e., that original cleansing is renewed to us, and we feel that cleansing once again -- the washing away of our restoration, the renewing of our spirits, the lifting up of the vitality of our spiritual lives -- and we are restored. Every believer has experienced this, but Jesus makes it clear to Peter.

And Peter's error is still being repeated today. There are those who, like him, refuse to have Jesus wash their feet. They are rejecting the indispensable requisite for enjoying their relationship with Christ. When they refuse to let Jesus wash their feet, as he said, they lose that sense of partnership with him.

On the other hand, there are those who, like Peter, feel that they need a bath all over again when they have lost their salvation and that somehow they have to start all over in their Christian experience. Now and then I run into people who are laboring under that delusion, who think that they need to be baptized only again, but again and again and again, as though the Holy Spirit had stuttered when he said, "regeneration," and had made it, "re-re-re-re-regeneration!" But Jesus teaches us by this whole passage that only one bath is needed. This is reflected in the truth of baptism. You are baptized once, as the institution of the Lord's Supper reflects the washing of the feet, the need for the cleansing again and again through the defilement and the guilt of sin.

In the closing portion of this section of the passage, through Verse 20, our Lord explains what he has done and you see here the example of Jesus standing contrast to that of Judas. Let's look first at Verse 20:

When he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his

master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." {John 13:12-17 RSV}

In those words Jesus is explaining the meaning of what he is doing. He begins again with his own "You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right. I am your teacher, I am your Lord -- your teacher has the right to instruct you; your Lord, with the right to command you." He acknowledges his own claim to authority, asserts that he has this right in their lives. But his argument is, "If I, then, with this acknowledged position of authority in your lives, have washed your feet, then you also are to wash one another's feet."

Now, what does he mean when he says that we ought to wash one another's feet? Some Christians have taken this very literally and have thought that our Lord was here instituting another sacrament, along with the Lord's Supper. And you will occasionally find groups of Christians who, very sincerely, have taken this literally; they call "foot-washing services," when they wash one another's feet. I attended one of these services on one occasion, and I noted that those who came were very careful to wash their own feet beforehand. They never have thought of coming with dirty feet to a footwashing service! But Jesus washed the dirty feet of his disciples, without any opportunity for preparation on their part. He took the role of the servant to the master.

No, Jesus is not giving us another sacrament to follow here, not another mere ceremony to go through. It really is meaningless because it doesn't reflect what was originally in view. But what he means is that we need the cleansing and forgiveness of our Lord in order to maintain the sense of unity and fellowship in our Christian life, so we need to forgive one another, to extend to one another free forgiveness for our guilt and for the injury that we may do to one another. We are to be, in the words of Paul, "tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us," {cf, Eph 4:32 KJV}. This is what Jesus taught us in the Lord's Prayer, isn't? "Forgive us our trespasses, even as we forgive those who trespass against us," {cf, Matt 6:12}. He is exhorting Christians to forgive each other, and his example of doing so is based upon his own example.

so righteously holier-than-thou, so remote from this whole dirty proposition, so above it all. They take this frigid, freezing water and they want to wash your feet. Nobody will allow it under those conditions, some, unfortunately, try to do it without water at all! They come and dry clean your feet; they scrub you of their dirt. Have you ever had anyone do that to you? They come and give you a piece of their manure into you. What they say may be true, but there is no water of love at all, nothing to wash it gently. It is a rigid insistence upon scraping away the dirt and the skin along with it. But our Lord insists that we wash another's feet in love. This is the manifestation that he loved his disciples, and he loved them to the end.

Notice the promised results: "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." That is, the secret of maintaining harmony among Christians, in a Christian family and in the larger family of the church.

A number of months ago a young man came to me from another church in this area. He was greatly troubled. He had found that one of the outstanding young laymen of the church, who had been appointed a member of the youth group of that church, was guilty of immorality with a young girl. This was threatening his marriage. And rumors of it had spread among the young people, so that the whole church was being stirred. It looked like a terrible disaster, a tragic occurrence that would split the church when it all came out. This troubled young man asked me, "What should I do?" I said, "Well, you've been given guidelines in the Scriptures as to what to do. 'Go to your brother and tell him his fault, between you and him alone in private.' If you hear you, you have gained your brother." (That is washing his feet.)

So he went back, and in a few weeks I got a letter from him. He said, "I took your advice. I went to my brother and simply told him what I knew. And I told him I loved him. I didn't try to destroy him. I didn't try to condemn him. I understood the pressures, the passions which moved him to this wrongdoing, and I loved him. But I told him what was happening in the congregation, and that what he had done was wrong. He acknowledged his sin. Together we went to the leaders of the church and laid the whole matter before them. The result was that this man has voluntarily left his ministry for awhile, until all this is straightened out in his life. But he has been healed, and his marriage has been saved and restored. And the church has been strengthened, rather than split." This is what Jesus means when he says, "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them."

The last part of the paragraph presents the contrast provided by Judas. Jesus says,

"I am not speaking of you all; I know whom I have chosen; it is that the scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.' I tell you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives any one whom I send receives me; and he who receives me receives him who sent me." {John 13:18-20 RSV}

The contrast here is between the knowledge of Jesus, and the ignorant unbelief of Judas. Jesus knew what was happening. He walked in the light of the Scriptures. He knew from the Scriptures what the end of the last week would be. He knew from the Scriptures that one among those close to him would betray him. He knew from the beginning which one it would be. But Judas didn't know that. Judas was ignorant of the avarice and greed of his own heart, and he was resisting every effort Jesus made to reach him. He was on the very verge of that final act of rejection which would plunge him over the precipice into complete disaster.

In the very next paragraph you see that described -- how he took the sop from Jesus' hand, and it was his final chance he had. When he did, Satan entered into him, and Judas was no longer his own master to any degree at all. But Jesus indicates that he understands what will happen. He says, "I'm telling you what will happen, so when it does, you will know I am the one this Scripture describes. I am the one the Scripture is speaking about." Judas, on the other hand, was utterly ignorant. He didn't know what was happening to him, or how he had fallen into Satan's snare, and now was at the very brink of disaster. As you read the next paragraph you can see how these two stand opposed one to another. Jesus sacrificed himself in order to save his disciples; Judas sacrificed Jesus in order to save himself. Those two philosophies dominate the whole scene.

In this final appeal, Jesus is directing a word to the holders of the two basic attitudes present, "The

say to you, he who receives any one whom I send receives me." That is a word to the disciples, and when someone comes to us to wash our feet, to help us with some problem of sin or error in our lives, remember that this person is sent by Jesus. Therefore it is Jesus himself who is standing before us, who is offering to wash our feet. And we are not to resent this kind of ministry on the part of our neighbor, not to say, "You have no right to come to me. This is my own private affair; you have nothing to do with it." But we are to remember that "He who receives any one whom I send," Jesus says, "receives me." Like Peter, fall into the error of rejecting the indispensable ministry of cleansing which Jesus offers.

The last word was addressed to Judas: "And he who receives me receives him who sent me." That is, he who receives the Father himself, God the Father. And there is no other way to the Father but by Jesus. The truth Jesus declares again and again, and it is the great truth which Judas sought to circumvent. He tried to relate to God without accepting Jesus. He tried to live his life before God without relating at all to Jesus and the salvation offered by Jesus.

There are many like that today, who, like Judas, are stumbling blindly on, not realizing that they are in the most important crisis of their life, and that only Jesus can bring them to God. Jesus said so himself in Chapter 14, just a page or two further on: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me," {John 14:6}. This was Jesus' last-ditch stand to reach Judas before it was too late.

chapters of John. We have only recently started looking at these last words of Jesus before the cross. In this thirteenth chapter we have a fascinating account of the understanding of Jesus of all the events leading to his death.

Remember how John opens this chapter, saying that Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and to go to the Father. And he knew that the Father had given all things into his hands. All power over heaven and earth was placed in his hands. Therefore he was, in a sense, directing his own death. He was in charge of the events. Rather than being a helpless victim of events over which he had no control, he was himself determining them as they went along.

You remember how, in the Garden, when the soldiers came to get him, Jesus so spoke to them that they fell backward upon the ground. You wonder, in reading that, just who was in charge. He gave orders to the soldiers to dismiss the rest of the apostles and let them go, and the soldiers obeyed. He was in charge throughout all this amazing series of events.

Then, Jesus knew of the strife and pride among his disciples as he entered the room. He knew that they were quarreling among themselves as to who would be the greatest in his kingdom. This drew forth his teaching evidenced in the footwashing. He taught them the lessons of humility and of the need for love, free from the sin of pride and hostility toward one another.

In the closing part of this chapter, beginning with Verse 21, we have three movements.

- First, you can see how Jesus knew and understood the hostility of Judas, which would lead to the betrayal of Jesus, and to the death of both Judas and Jesus -- one by suicide, one by crucifixion.
- Then, he knew the weakness of Peter. That comes in at the end of the chapter. He understood that there was a weakness in Peter that he had within him, and that this would lead to his three-fold denial and his cursing.
- In between, you have a great but brief section in which it is evident that our Lord knew the glory, the means by which glory is achieved -- the principle which Judas rejected. And he also understood the power of love, a principle of which Peter was ignorant. This would be the most important secret that he would loose upon the world.

So there is the outline of the section we will go through this morning.

Let's take first the incident of Judas and Jesus together, beginning with Verse 21:

When Jesus had thus spoken, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was lying close to the breast of Jesus; so Simon Peter beckoned to him and said, "Tell us who it is of whom he speaks." So lying thus, close to the breast of Jesus, he said to him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give this morsel when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. {John 13:21-26 RSV}

John sets this account against the background of the distress of Jesus. He said that when Jesus spoke after the footwashing, and had recognized what Judas was, he was "troubled in spirit." The Greek word means that he was "deeply agitated," he was grieved, hurt. Going to the cross was not an easy thing to do. If we think of him as being unmoved through this whole circumstance, of speaking with perfect untroubled spirit, we are wrong, because Jesus was deeply disturbed at this point. It grieved him to face this perfidy and treachery in Judas. He had just quoted from the 41st Psalm the verse in which it is said, "He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me," {Psa 41:9b RSV}. In the mind of Jesus was what Judas was about to do. The phrase, "he has lifted his heel against me" is a word-picture of a man who, without warning, for no reason, suddenly turns around, lifts his heel, and kicks you in the face. Imagine how stunning that would be. Thus Jesus is greatly troubled as he anticipates this action. He feels it with full force as an act of callous betrayal by one whom he had loved and trusted.

Now, Jesus knew that it was coming. This is made clear in many accounts. As far back as the sixth chapter of John we are told that Jesus said, "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" {cf, John 6:70} He had known all along that one of his own disciples would betray him, because the Scriptures had foretold it. And he knew which one it was, yet nevertheless at this point, when Judas is actually on the verge of doing this, it hits with tremendous impact upon Jesus' heart, and he is grieved and hurt and distressed.

For he knew that the story of Judas was one of increasing greed. He had traced it. If you put together a few little references to Judas in the Scriptures you can see what was happening to this man. It begins with John 6:70. When he first joined the twelve he evidently was a sincere, dedicated follower. He had a good business and a reputation for honesty. Therefore he was chosen to be the treasurer of the twelve. He was in charge of the money box. This indicated that the other disciples had confidence in him, and that he had a reputation for honesty. You never elect a treasurer who doesn't show some indication of being able to handle money properly. (I have always been surprised and disturbed that I have never been elected treasurer of a church.) But Judas was elected treasurer of the apostolic band.

When he had joined, he evidently had seen in Jesus the chance to fulfill his dream. Judas believed that Jesus was the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the coming Messiah who would deliver Israel from Roman bondage and make it the head of the nations of the earth. He believed that world government would be established in Jerusalem. There were all the great passages of the Old Testament which spoke of this. And Judas, like all Jews, had read all the wonderful passages of glory, but had ignored those which dealt with the suffering of the Messiah. So he joined the band with the anticipation that he would be in the inner circle. And as you read the story together you can see that he began to think of himself in these terms.

But when Jesus began to speak about the cross, and when Judas saw him offending the leaders of the Sanhedrin and he saw the growing opposition of the Pharisees toward Jesus, Judas knew that his dream was being dashed. He became inwardly resentful and bitter against Jesus. Finally he took matters into his own hands. In the previous chapter, in Verse 6, that Judas had begun to steal money out of the money box. In this chapter, Mary, who wiped Jesus' feet with the ointment, John says, beginning with Verse 4,

But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was to betray him), said, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box he used to take what was put into it. {John 12:4-6 RSV}

So for some time Judas had been stealing out of the treasury. What for? Well, as you put the story together it is evident that he had contracted to buy a piece of property, evidently a parcel nearby Jerusalem, a strategic location, which he thought would be a good spot to build on when the kingdom came. He had put up the money himself. He was, in other words, feathering his own nest, utilizing the opportunity of being treasurer of the band to take the money for this purpose. As the hatred of Jesus by the Jews grew, and Judas saw that the kingdom was approaching when an inevitable climax must ensue, he grew impatient. Lacking thirty pieces of silver to complete his purchase, he went to the high priest and made a deal with him to betray Jesus for the money he needed to purchase the property. Later, when the money was brought back by Judas and flung at the feet of the priests took it and went out and finished the payment, bought the property, and called it the Field of Blood because it was there that Judas had hanged himself.

Jesus knew that it was covetousness, avarice, greed, hunger for worldly enjoyment that was motivating Judas. And yet Jesus was grieved and hurt, because he knew that the callous selfishness of Judas had come about only by his repeated rejection of Jesus' love. You can't read the story of these two men without being consistently aware that Jesus tried to reach Judas. Even here at the last supper it is apparent.

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adjoining couch to the right was John the Apostle. He always refers to himself as "that disciple whom Jesus loved." As he tells us here, he was sitting close to the breast of Jesus. His head would have been at Jesus' chest-level because of the arrangement of the couches. And on the other side, the left side, which, incidentally, was the place of honor, was Judas. And Jesus' head would have been at Judas' head level. John's head was at Jesus'. This arrangement made it possible for these two to carry on an intimate conversation unheard by the others. Only that table arrangement explains what happened here at the last supper.

This gesture of giving the place of honor to Judas was Jesus' last attempt to try to reach this man. Another mark of honor which Jesus bestowed was the giving of this little morsel. It was a custom to do this, to break off a piece of bread or a bit of meat, dip it in juice, and hand it to a favored guest. As we propose a toast in someone's honor at a banquet today. Jesus took the bread and dipped it in juice and gave it to Judas in the presence of all the disciples. Only John heard Jesus say that this would mark the betrayer. So, when Jesus gave this morsel to Judas he was honoring him in the presence of the others.

And yet never once in all the time that Judas had been with Jesus is there any record that he ever allowed Jesus to love him. He never opened up, never admitted what he was thinking. He never received Jesus' love in the least degree, but increasingly he kept up a false front, a phony facade. Now at the end of all the efforts of Jesus to reach him, he has "lifted up his heel" against him and kicked him right in the face. We come to the last note of this tragic sequence, showing the increasing grip of evil on Judas, beginning in Verse 27:

Then after the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly." Now no one at the table knew why he had said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the money box, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the feast"; or, that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the morsel, he immediately went out; and it was night. {John 13:27-30 RSV}

You remember that the chapter began with satanic influence upon Judas. In Verse 2 John says, "At the supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray me" (John 13:2 RSV). There you see that Judas' greed had given the devil an opportunity. When we resist God and follow a determined march toward evil, it gives the devil opportunity. And he had the opportunity to implant thoughts in Judas' heart which would take deep root immediately. So he had already put it in Judas' heart to betray Jesus; the deal had been arranged.

But Judas still had a chance to retreat. Jesus would never have tried to reach him had he not still had the opportunity to recover at this point. When Jesus gave him the morsel, and Judas took it and ate it without a word or a sign of repentance or remorse, he passed the point of no return.

When Jesus gave him the morsel, and Judas took it and ate it without a word or a sign of repentance or remorse, he passed the point of no return.

quickly!" And the final word of John is, "he immediately went out; and it was night." John very likely is thinking in the same terms as the words he later would write in his first epistle: "If we walk in the light... is in the light..." -- if we walk out where our lives are open, where we don't try to hide anything, sin and our failure and our weakness is all there before God, but we don't try to justify it or to hide it, we expose it -- "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, ... the blood of Jesus, God's Son, cleanses all sin," {cf, 1 Jn 1:7}. But if we turn from the light, turn our backs on Jesus and walk away, determined to do our own will, we walk into darkness, into night. And it is Jude, one of the brothers of Jesus, who records that there are those who are like "wandering stars, for whom the nether gloom of darkness is reserved forever," {Jude 1:13 RSV}.

So Judas leaves, and Jesus now turns to his disciples. And he shares with them great truth that he wanted to share while the traitor was present:

When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of man is glorified, and in him God is glorified; if God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." {John 13:31-35 RSV}

Here in this brief passage is the key to the rest of the chapters of this discourse. Chapters 14 through 17 flow out of these words here. Jesus states an old principle, and gives a new commandment. The key is in these words: "Now is the Son of man glorified, and in him God is glorified; if God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once." Notice the stress on glory. This is the principle of glory, the principle by which we achieve glory. Glory is the recognition of who you really are. This is something we all long for. We are all striving for glory. We want to be recognized; we want people to think highly of us. We long to be seen, to become the center of attention. We all want people to think highly of us.

the revolutionary beside him, and prayed for his enemies. And previously, in Pilate's hall, he had looked at Peter with compassion when Peter had denied him. And you see the love and concern of his heart for his mother -- the last thing he did before he died -- committing her into the hands of John.

And there is that strange, unfathomable mystery of his work -- how he could be at once the sacrifice offered, and the priest offering the blood before the Father? How he could be both the victim of man's hatred and cruelty and guilt and, at the same time, be the victor over all the forces of darkness and death, over the principalities and powers whom he took and nailed to the cross? We never can understand it, but there is the glory of Jesus -- all hidden there in the cross of Christ.

And God was glorified in him. That is the second thing, he said. The cross not only reveals Jesus to the Father -- all the truth about the Father. The strange idea has arisen among Christians, I have said, that Jesus is the innocent sufferer, placating the wrath of a terribly angry God who is ready to smite the world; that is not the biblical view. The Bible says, "God was in Christ reconciling the world himself," {2 Cor 5:20 RSV}. You see in the cross the holiness and the justice of God. Isaiah says, "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him; he has put him to grief. He has made his soul an offering for sin," {cf, Isa 53:10}. There you see the holiness and the sovereignty of God. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, could say, "Jesus was delivered up [to be crucified] according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God," {cf, Acts 2:23}. He was in charge of the events. There you see the mercy and the love and grace of the Father. As Paul writes to the Romans,

It has always been the will of God to saturate the common clay of a man's humanity, and then to send that man in open display into a hostile world as a living testimony that it is possible for the invisible God to make himself visible in a man.

"By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." {John 13:35}

Now we will take just a quick look at the closing scene with Peter and Jesus:

Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going? " Jesus answered, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now; but you shall follow afterward." Peter said to him, "Lord, why cannot I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the cock will not crow, till you have denied me three times." {John 13:36-38 RSV}

Judas betrayed Jesus; Peter denied his Lord. What is the difference between these two men? What is the difference between betrayal and denial?

Jesus himself has already explained this for us in Verse 10 of this chapter. Remember that he said he had already been bathed and needed only to wash his feet. Judas had never been bathed, had never been cleansed once for the cleansing of love, had never opened his life to Jesus. Peter had dirty feet but a clean heart; Judas had an evil heart of unbelief, though perhaps an outward walk of apparent morality. And that is the difference between who will betray Jesus.

What Peter lacked was the understanding of love. Peter thought that he loved Jesus, and he did - but he lacked the human emotion of which he was capable. But he had not yet learned to walk by the love of Christ. He had not yet learned to find his identity, not in his efforts to try to be something in himself, but in his dependence on Jesus for him. That is the secret. Jesus knew that. Peter, with the utmost dedication of his life

Title: Judas and Peter
Series: Secrets of the Spirit
Scripture: John 13:21-38
Message No: 2
Catalog No: 3122
Date: April 29, 1973

THE CURE FOR TROUBLED HEARTS

by Ray C. Stedman

It is probably more than coincidental that Dr. Philip Caves, a heart surgeon, led us in prayer this morning because this message is going to deal with heart trouble of a somewhat different nature, one which is more common even than heart disease, which has become one of the foremost killers in the world today. As we move into the Upper Room again, we find the Lord facing the troubled hearts of his disciples. This message opens with his words to them:

"Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me." {John 14:1 RSV}

As our Lord looked at these men, he knew what was going on in their minds and hearts, knew how troubled and upset they were, and knew what was causing it. He knew the remedy for it, as well. Perhaps there are many among us here who are suffering from the same affliction as these disciples -- troubled hearts, hearts that are upset, disturbed, agitated hearts because of what was going on. Our Lord knew that these disciples were afraid -- afraid of what was coming. They were afraid of death, afraid that they, with him, were going to be executed by the Jews. They knew of the opposition which had developed against them in Jerusalem.

was that he was going to leave them, and that they would have to face death, and life, without his reassuring word is, "I am not going to leave you, I am coming to you again." You find this development in the rest of the chapter. Let me outline the structure of it for you. You will understand this chapter more when you realize two facts.

- First, the Lord is going to come again in person to end their fear of death, so that death is no longer a terror for them (as it need hold none for us). This assurance he gives them in the promise in Verse 3, at which we will look in just a moment.
- Second, he is going to come again by the Spirit to end their fear of life. He promises to be with them in all the difficulties and problems of their life -- in a living relationship based upon his relationship with the Father. That is stated flatly in Verse 18, "I will not leave you desolate [i.e., orphaned] because I will come to you."

Both of these comings are made possible by that strange relationship which our Lord had with his Father, which led him to say to these disciples, "Believe in God, believe also in me."

Now, the answer to fear is faith. The next time you are afraid, reach out for a promise of God, and hold it by the power of Jesus, and your fear will vanish. There is no other answer to fear but that. Anytime you will permit the fear to come back again and again. But the promise of God remains steady and sure. The availability of the resources of Jesus to lay hold of it is the way of deliverance.

So let's look at Jesus' promise to come to end the fear of death, found in Verses 2-3:

"In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." {John 14:2-3 RSV}

Our Lord is looking on into the future with his disciples. Here he unveils the nature of the future beyond this life. What happens beyond that? I don't think there is one of us who hasn't, at one time or another, sensed the fear which lies in the unknown, beyond death. We have all felt that strange spirit which comes when you confront the fact of death, the fact that we are all someday going to die, and our loved ones will die. Life here must end, and what lies beyond? This is what our Lord is facing with his disciples.

He reassures them with four revelations about that life:

First, he states that what happens is going to be within the Father's house. Of course, he is talking about believers. They belong to him, and on that basis he assures them, "In my Father's house are many rooms." What do you think he means by "my Father's house"? This is the only time that phrase is employed in the New Testament. Therefore it is very difficult to say exactly what this means by trying to compare it with other passages -- until you go to the Old Testament. There you see that some of the prophets clearly indicate that God dwells in the universe. The whole universe is the Father's house. God, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, says,

"Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool;
what is the house which you would build for me," {Isa 66:1b RSV}

"and what is the place of my rest?
All these things my hand has made,
and so all these things are mine," {Isa 66:1d-2a RSV}

Our Lord on many occasions had been out with his disciples under the brilliant sky at night. And as he looked up into the heavens and saw the stars and galaxies whirling in space, he must have reminded himself many times that this was the Father's house. Oftentimes I am asked, "Does the Bible say anything about whether there is life on other planets?" And the answer is, "No, it doesn't specifically say that." But in this reference there is a suggestion, I believe, that this is the case. What Jesus says here is, "In my Father's house are many rooms."

Paul's words echo the words of Jesus here: "I will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." What an answer that is, not only to the problems of history, but also to the personal fear of a beloved one's death! Because other passages make clear that this event, which is yet to break into history -- the coming of Jesus for his own -- is the very event which every believer experiences when he dies. When we die, we step into the coming of Jesus for his own. This, then, is the hope, and the assurance, of everyone who dies as a member of the body of Jesus Christ. What an answer this is to the fear of death!

There was an editorial column on the church page of the Times last night which took Christians to task for the inconsistent way they treat death. So many Christians seem to echo the fear and pessimism of the world when they think of death as a somber, gloomy occasion. This editorial brought to light the fact that it ought to be a time of triumph, and of joy, because a believer has gone home to be with Jesus.

I remember listening years ago to a radio broadcast of the Bible Study Hour, when Dr. Donald Greer, pastor of the Tenth Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, was the speaker. I'll never forget his telling of the occasion when his first wife had died. He, with his children, had been to the funeral home. As he was driving his motherless children home, they were naturally overcome with grief at the loss of their mother. Dr. Barnhouse said that he was trying to think of some word of comfort that he could give them. As a huge moving van passed them. As it passed, the shadow of the truck swept over the car. And as it pulled on in front of them, an inspiration came to Dr. Barnhouse. He said, "Children, would you rather be run over by a truck, or by its shadow?" The children said, "Well, of course, Dad, we'd much rather be run over by the shadow! That can't hurt us at all." Dr. Barnhouse said, "Did you know that two thousand years ago a truck of death ran over the Lord Jesus ... in order that only its shadow might run over us?" And he explained how David had said in the 23rd Psalm,

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil; for thou art with me. {Psa 23:4a KJV}

This is the promise which every believer has from the lips of Jesus himself: "I will come again and take you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also."

Then he goes on in the remaining verses to show us the way, the way to the Father, the way in which our salvation will be accomplished. And it all relates to that remarkable word with which he began: "Believe in God, and also in me." He says to them, in Verses 4-7,

"And you know the way where I am going." Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; henceforth you know him and have seen him." {John 14:4-7 RSV}

Here is the way to the Father at death, or the way to the Father in the midst of life, for the secret is found in this passage. I believe that Jesus deliberately made this statement to these disciples in order to give them knowledge something which they hadn't realized. He said to them, "You know the way where I am going." And Thomas, dear old "honest Thomas" -- we should never call him "doubting Thomas"; he was simply "honest Thomas," too honest to say that he knew something which he didn't realize that he didn't know. Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" But Jesus said that they did know. And he said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; henceforth you know him and have seen him." {John 14:4-7 RSV}

simB.2d "simB, way?" B.2e co a8" B.2e co ai7 I b e7"

{John 14:8-11 RSV}

In this paragraph our Lord is dealing with the secret of his own being. In some ways this is the most important revelation that we have in the entire New Testament of the nature of the Lord in his relationship with the Father. And it is absolutely fundamental. This is what he meant when he said to his disciples at the end of this chapter, "Believe in God, believe also in me." That is, "Understand there is a unique relationship between the Father and the Son, and this is the secret of my life, and which will be the secret of your life, too. You must understand that I have not come here simply to demonstrate how God works, how God looks, how God acts; I have come to demonstrate how a man acts who is in right relationship with God, who is filled with God. The Father is in me, and he does the works. I do them, but I do them by a secret relationship in which, though I do them -- my mind thinks, my hands work, and my body acts -- it nevertheless is really the Father who does all this through me. I live in him; he lives in me."

"And if you want proof of this," he says to Philip, "look at two things: my words, and my works. My words prove that I am in the Father. I could never say what I say if I were not in the Father, for what I say is reality, it is the way things are. And my works prove that the Father is in me. A man could never do that, but God can. And you must understand this, Philip. Otherwise you will have no understanding of the secret of your own life." For, in Verse 20, he is going to go on to say (though we won't look at it yet) "In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you." That is, "The relationship which I have with the Father is the pattern which I will have with you. Just as I live by means of the Father's work in me, so you will live by means of me at work in you. I will come to you, I will live in you, I

hear a great deal these days about an identity crisis, and the need to find oneself. This reflects an important psychological fact. It is important to know who you are.

I find Christians all over this country who do not understand this truth about their new life in Christ. The source from which they get their identity is this fact, that Jesus is in them, and lives in them. It is to this source they should return whenever there are pressures and problems and difficulties and heartaches and troubles.

God or for God's operation; who think of life as consisting merely of what can be observed and le
acted on; and who think they don't really need God in order to live. Our world is being rapidly secu

dead, heal the sick, open the eyes of the blind, still the storm, multiply the loaves and fishes -- all

you examine it you find only one, "Ask anything whatsoever in my name and it shall be done." What does "in my name" mean? Somehow again, in a superficial approach to these ideas of Scripture, some have fulfilled this when they tack on at the end of a prayer, "This we ask in Jesus' name" -- as a formula, like rubbing Aladdin's lamp so that the "genie" of God will suddenly appear and do all that

Now, I have no objection to people adding those words. I do it myself. But there are many prayers with words tacked onto the end which are not prayed in Jesus' name at all. To add those words does not make a prayer in Jesus' name. God is not impressed with this kind of trivia. I think of our Lord's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount where he says, "Don't pray like the hypocrites do, thinking that they will impress God with your endless repetition," (see Matt 6:5-7). Prayer is not magic.

What, then, does "in Jesus' name" mean? I've been given some difficult and painful lessons on what it means! I think God teaches us through our experiences, as we go on through life, to give us deep insight into what these phrases mean. I had thought that praying in Jesus' name meant praying for what he wants accomplished, the ends he wishes to achieve, the desires which he says are his will. And that is not wrong. But I thought you could pray to prevent certain things, and to attain things that we had an ability somehow to control the process by which these things come to pass. I have learned that this is not the case. I prayed for weeks, with all my heart, that something wouldn't happen, but it did happen, in spite of my prayer.

So what do you do with your prayer in a case like that? And what do you do with the promise? I think "in Jesus' name" means to pray in his place. That is the way we use the phrase, isn't it? If someone says "in the name of the president," it is as though he is standing in the president's place. If you give someone to act in your name, for that purpose it is as though you yourself were acting. When you sign your check, that check is acting on your behalf, as though it were you. To pray in Jesus' name means to pray in Jesus' place. And where was Jesus standing when he said these words? Facing the cross. Facing the end of all the hope that his kingdom had raised in the hearts of his disciples. Facing the end, the apparent failure and failure of all of his work and all of his program.

But he knew that beyond the cross lay the resurrection, and that there could never be that new beginning there were not first an end of all which the others saw and hoped for. I think that if these disciples were praying for anything, and I'm sure they were, they were praying that somehow he would be spared. Somehow he would not have to go to the cross. They were praying to prevent it. But Jesus knew that would not be. And to pray in Jesus' name means that you accept the process of God, the process by which things often collapse, matters, often, to utter collapse, so that the very thing you don't want to ever happen, happens. Beyond the end of the story! Beyond it is a resurrection. Beyond it is a new beginning, a beginning of such a new quality that the mind moves into an ecstasy of joy in contemplating it. That is what it means to pray in Jesus' name.

That is why, when we pray, it often seems as though God waits until the very last moment to answer our prayer. That is why he doesn't stop the process long before the heartache and pain comes, but allows it to go on into death -- and out of the death comes resurrection. And to pray in Jesus' name means that you accept that process, and that you are aware that prayer is not merely a shield, a guard, to prevent things from happening. Sometimes it is, but not always. Prayer is also a commitment to undergo the end and the failure. But that is never the end of the story. It is by this means that the greater works of God are accomplished. It is only out of death that life comes.

This is what God teaches us through the Scriptures. This is why one day he had to say to Abraham, "Offer up your son Isaac, your only son, your beloved son, and offer him up as a sacrifice." And Abraham had to go through with it. It was only as the knife was poised in his hand, ready to plunge into the breast of his son that God stopped him, (see Gen 22:1-12). The book of Hebrews says that Abraham received his son back from the dead though it were a resurrection -- out of death comes life (cf, Heb 11:19). That is what it means to pray in Jesus' name. It may mean, therefore, the collapse of all that you hoped for. But out of that collapse, out of the heartbreak, God will bring new life.

Prayer

That is so simple even a child can grasp and understand it! Yet that is the fundamental secret of a behavior. It is our basic identity. Jesus said that his basic identity was: "I in the Father, and the Father in me." And ours, he says, is: "You in me, and I in you."

In Verse 21 he goes on to speak about love and obedience:

"He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me;" {John 14:21 RSV}

Notice carefully the connection between Verse 21 and what we have just looked at in Verse 20. Verse 21 you have the proof of love: "He who has my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me," says Jesus. But notice that he does not reverse this, as many do who read this. They think that if you obey him you will thereby love him, that obeying his commandments is what creates love for him. For great many Christians who are trying to live on that basis. In fact, as I have traveled about, I have seen hundreds and thousands of Christians who exhibit in their lives a very mechanical obedience which will create love for Christ.

But that is, instead, the recipe for legalism. To read this, "Obey me, and you will love me," produces a mechanical, sterile, dry, dusty Christianity with no warmth or joy or glory. But what Jesus says is "Love me, you will obey me." It is easy to do, not difficult. Look at Verse 15, where he says this very clearly: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Notice, it is not, "If you love me, you will have my commandments." No, no. It is cause and effect: "If you love me, the result is that you will keep my commandments." That is the secret of all proper behavior in the Christian experience, and we need to be careful to make that clear. The proof of our love is obedience. That is how we demonstrate that we love him.

Now, if it takes love to obey, what produces love? That is really the question, isn't it? That is the question: How do you see a Christian disobeying Christ, or you yourself are tempted to disobey, what is it that will turn you around and make you obey? It is love. Well, how do you produce love? What will make you love him? This is the answer: It ties together Verses 20 and 21. It is that basic secret of our identity which creates love -- the Spirit releasing to us the love of Jesus, awakens love from us in return.

Remember how John puts it in his first letter: "We love, because he first loved us," {1 Jn 4:19 RSV}. Remembering this awakens love. Or, as Paul puts it in Romans 5, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given unto us," {Rom 5:5 KJV}.

Therefore the way to produce love is to remember who you are, to whom you belong, and who has died for you, his death, his resurrection, and his unity with you, his present indwelling life. You cannot remind yourself of his love without having something happen to you, without experiencing a renewed sense of his love and of his power for whom he is and what he has done in your life. And when that love begins to flow, then you are motivated to obey.

Has it occurred to you that much of the mythology of the ancient world was based upon Christian fact? Many of our fables and fairy tales are, in a sense, garbled and distorted versions of Christian fact? Some of our most popular fables are the same: For instance, you remember Clark Kent, that mild-mannered newspaper reporter, whom no one ever expected anything out of the ordinary. But whenever there was a sudden demand for power far beyond the ability of mortal men, he always stepped into the nearest phone booth (fortunately always handy), stripped off his conservative business suit, and emerged complete with bulging muscles and a spectacular costume as Superman -- able to do what otherwise he could not do.

That is exactly what the Word of God is teaching us, although perhaps you had not seen it in that way before! We are to retire to the "phone booth" of our identity with Christ, to remind ourselves of who we are, to whom we belong, and who is within us, and immediately we find love and motivation and power available to us. We are able to do what otherwise we could not do. This is what our Lord is teaching his disciples at that moment: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." When we love him, when we retreat to that place, and love is made known in our hearts by the Spirit, obedience becomes much easier.

Therefore the key to motivation is never to threaten, but to appeal. This is why Paul writes to Chloë and beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies ..." {Rom 12:1} There is a place for fear as a motive in the Christian life, usually in terms of preventing us from doing what we ought not to do. When you are tempted to do something you know is wrong, fear comes in, and it is a good fear, fear of God's just reprisal, of the consequence, of your actions, fear of hurting others and of being hurt yourself, fear of having to stand before the searching eyes of God, knowing that he sees the utmost of your life. Fear then keeps you from doing what is wrong. But when you are asked to do something that is right, what motivates you then? Love. Love for Jesus.

Have you noticed how many times in the Scriptures appeals are made to us to do what our flesh does not want to do? To submit to authority, for instance: I come to a stop sign, and I'm in a hurry, and the sign says "STOP." I don't want to stop; I want to keep going. But to stop is part of my Christian life, because that is what the authorities require. Wives are to submit to their husbands, and they don't want to -- especially in the modern world a twisted form of liberation is being proclaimed. Some think that "submit" is a dirty word, not realizing that it is a Christian word which applies to everybody -- men, women, and children alike. Husbands are to submit to Christ and to his word, and they don't want to do that. Servants are asked to submit to their masters and to yield them glad obedience. When somebody asks you to do something you know you ought to do but don't want to do it -- your flesh wants to refuse, to say, "Hang it on you ear! Who do you think you are, telling me what to do?" -- what will motivate you to want to do it?

His voice broke, and he could hardly control himself as he poured out his heart to these pastors.

"Why, why will you not teach the Word of God to people?"

It was a moving plea. But that is what Jesus means.

Can we not apply that to our own hearts and say,

- "Why will we not read his word?"
- Why will we not spend some time in knowing what he says?"

The second element of proof is that he who has Jesus' commandments keeps them. He follows them himself to obey what the Lord has said, to do what he asks. "He who has my commandments and he it is who loves me." If you want to convince Jesus Christ that you love him, don't make a show of it, or of professing it, and telling him about it -- just obey him, that's all, just do what he asks. He knows that your obedience cannot come except out of a heart moved by love for him.

The reward of love follows. Our Lord says,

"He who has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him."
{John 14:21 RSV}

Three things follow for those who love him -- not merely believe in him, notice, but love him and trust in him:

First, they will be loved by the Father. Isn't it remarkable that though we begin our Christian life with Jesus -- we see him our Redeemer, our Savior -- it isn't very long before we are conscious of being loved by a family and being loved by a Father? One of the men who went with us on our trip is Ed Woodhall, an automobile body shop in Sunnyvale. He gave his testimony wherever we went. I was struck by his testimony of how empty his life once had been. Even though he was raised in a church and had known these things all his life, nevertheless his life was empty and unsatisfying -- a wreck. Then he began to understand the great, basic secret of identity -- "You in me, and I in you" -- and he began to live on that basis. But as his problems were being solved, he told us, "because he had a loving heavenly Father who was at work for them." Being loved by the Father deals with our circumstances. It is the discipline of God which provides for various circumstances in order to train us and to teach us. He gives us joyful and happy circumstances as difficult and demanding ones. That is the expression of the love of the Father.

The second part of the reward, Jesus says, is "I will love him," and that is something different. The Father loves us by meeting our needs. His love is that of supply and training, whereas the Lord Jesus loves us by inward release to our feelings, by the sense of his being and of his love. The love of Jesus has more effect on our feelings than does the Father's love. Paul prays for the Ephesians that "Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love" {Eph 3:17 RSV}, that feeling of being accepted, of being important, of having worth as a human being, that sense of acceptance by the Lord Jesus who belongs to him -- the knowledge and understanding of that is the feeling he is speaking of here.

The third element of this reward of love is "I will manifest myself to him." That is, occasions and circumstances will arise in which Jesus will be very near, very real, very dear to you. Increasingly you will learn to know him, and to enter into the understanding of the being and character of the Son of God who speaks to the hearts of all who are Christians. The one thing we want more than anything else is the knowledge of Jesus. This he promises to those who love him and thus obey him: He will manifest himself to them. I can testify that there have been times in my own experience, particularly of recent days, when Jesus has been more real to me than any other person -- so real, it seemed, that I could touch him. It is the manifestation of his response to love from us.

Then Judas, one of the disciples, asked a question, out of which came a remarkable answer:

Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?" {John 14:22 RSV}

The Jews understood that when the Messiah came he would manifest himself to the whole world. Jesus said that he would manifest himself to these disciples in a way that the world could not perceive. They were curious about this and so he asks the question. The answer Jesus gives runs from Verse 23 through Verse 26. There are four elements in it by which Jesus describes how he is going to do this, how he will manifest himself to us.

First he repeats what he said before:

Jesus answered him, "If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." {John 14:23 RSV}

I had an experience of this sort not long ago. I mentioned in our last study how the phrase "what ask in my name" came alive to me in a new way. I began to see that it involves the cross and the

you will ask me no questions." I think his disciples must have shaken their heads, "We can't wait for you to come! We've got so many questions to ask you!" But when the day of the Spirit came, it was he who asked him no questions. There was an inner revelation of Jesus which they had never known before the days of his flesh. And he is saying this to us as well. "I will manifest myself to you. I will be closer to you in Palo Alto in the 20th century than I was with my disciples when I walked the hills of Galilee with them."

The chapter closes on a rather sinister note, Verses 30 and 31:

"I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no power over me; but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go hence." {John 14:30-31 RSV}

Do you see the parallel he is drawing between what he has just said to them and what he says to us that if we love him we will obey him. If love is in our hearts it will always issue in an obedient and trustful walk. And now he says that he goes toward the bitterness and death of a cross. The ruler of this world is coming. He is going into an encounter with Satan -- a bitter death -- grapple in the darkness. But he has to go. "He has no power over me," said Jesus. But he goes because he loves the Father. Because he loved the Father, he obeyed him. Ahead lay Gethsemene's agony, the cruel scourge, the mocking and taunting of the Jews, the blood and the pain and the death and hell of the cross. What drove him to go was because he loved the Father and he wanted to give the Father his heart's desire.

And what was that? "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life," {cf, John 3:16}. That is what the Father wanted. And to give it to him, the Son obeyed him and went into the darkness and death of the cross.

When we must face into something we do not want to do, and our flesh cries out, "No! I don't want to do that," we can find the strength to do it by remembering who we are, to whom we belong, and that we are doing it for the Lord the desire of his heart if we submit to what he has asked us to do.

Prayer

Our heavenly Father, we pray that we may learn this great lesson, may learn to submit to your loving choices for us, and that we may drink the cup which you have given us to drink -- for the Lord's sake, for his sake who loved us and gave himself for us. We ask in Jesus' name Amen.

Title: Love's Power
Series: Secrets of the Spirit
Scripture: John 14:20-31
Message No: 5
Catalog No: 3125
Date: June 3, 1973

GOD'S VINEYARD

by Ray C. Stedman

At the close of Chapter 14 our Lord said to his disciples, "Rise, let us go hence." So from this point on, the remainder of the book properly should no longer call this passage of Scripture the Upper Room Discourse. Chapters 15 through 17, occurred as they were walking on their way to the Garden of Gethsemene. The traditional site of the Upper Room in Jerusalem is on the western side of the Old City, on the slope of Mount Zion. Some of you may have been there and seen it. If indeed this is the location, they then took the way down across the Tyropoeon Valley, which separated the Temple from the rest of the city, around the Temple area, skirting the Temple area, down into the Kidron Valley, across the brook, and then up the slope of the Mount of Olives.

Olives to the garden.

For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts
is the house of Israel,
and the men of Judah
are his pleasant planting;
and he looked for justice,
but behold, bloodshed;
for righteousness,
but behold, a cry! {Isa 5:7 RSV}

God came looking for justice and righteousness; instead he found oppression, cruelty, exploitation and indifference to the needs of others. So it is evident from that parable that the fruit which God expects from the vine is moral character, or as we have it in the New Testament, the fruit of the Spirit -- the fruit which the Spirit produces. The life which is in the vine produces fruit which Paul describes in Galatians 5 as love, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control. The fruit, in other words, is Christ-likeness. And our Lord is indicating that the very purpose of the vine is to produce such fruit.

We Christians are God's great vineyard. The Father is the vinedresser. He is responsible to see that the purpose of the vine is fulfilled. And, as Jesus goes on to point out, he has a two-fold work:

First,

"You are already made clean[pruned] by the word which I have spoken to you." {John 15:3 RSV}

Here in remarkable imagery he captures the work which goes on in our lives as the Father employs circumstances in which we are found, the situations of our lives, to make us heed and hear the Word which corrects and changes. I am sure you have all had the experience of being confronted with a word of truth and learning from it that something you had been doing all your life, and which you thought was right, was actually wrong. Perhaps you were manifesting or defending some attitude. Your whole family had been a family characteristic. Therefore, you thought it was right. But you learned from the Word that what you were doing was wrong. Perhaps for a while you paid no attention to that Word, as many of us don't, and we were exhibiting this characteristic even though it hurt you and hurt others -- until some circumstance occurred in which the Father put you in such a place that you had to listen to the Word. The hurt was too severe and suddenly we were confronted with what you were doing to yourself and to others -- you felt it and heard it and saw it. That is the Father's pruning knife cutting off the sucker shoots of the old life within us, so that we might produce more of the Christlikeness, the fruit of the Spirit. This is the work of the Father.

He not only does this, but he does it repeatedly. Notice that Jesus says here to the disciples, "You are already made clean." That is, "This pruning has gone on in your life already." But that was not the end of it; it was to be more as they went on. In a vineyard the vines are pruned not just once in their lifetimes; they are pruned repeated every spring. There is a pruning time, a pruning season.

Are you going through a pruning season right now? Is God using the sharp knife of circumstances to cut off the "sucker shoot" of an old habit or attitude in your life, confronting you with that word of truth which corrects and cleanses, causing you to see it and feel it and hear it and give heed to it? Well, that is the work of the Father, and it is done in order that you might bear more fruit, be more like Jesus in your reactions at home, in your shop, in your recreation, wherever you may be with people -- that you may be able to bear more fruit.

In Verses 4 and 5 our Lord goes on to set forth, in the most helpful way I know of in all of Scripture, the basic relationship which is already established by the coming of the Holy Spirit into an individual's life. Verse 4 says, "Abide in me, and I in you." Now he adds this note of responsibility -- there is something which you must do in this relationship; it is not merely to be recognized; it is to be acted upon:

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in me, the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." {John 15:4-5 RSV}

This is an extremely helpful passage! Notice that our Lord divides it into two sections. There is an active voice which is to be done, and a passivity which is to be acknowledged -- an active voice and a passive voice. We are to abide in him (that is active, something we do), and we are to let him abide in us (that is passive, something we allow him to do). Both these relationships are absolutely essential, not one as opposed to the other but both together.

When our Lord says "Abide in me," he is talking about the will, about the choices, the decisions we must make. We must decide to do things which expose ourselves to him and keep ourselves in contact with him. We must choose to let him abide in us. We have been placed into Christ by the Holy Spirit. Now we must choose to maintain that relationship by the decisions we make, i.e., decisions to expose ourselves to his Word in order to hear about him, and to relate to him in prayer wherein we converse with him, and to relate to other believers in our body-life experiences, i.e., bearing one another's burdens and confessing our faults and sharing in our joys with one another, wherein we learn about and see Christ in one another. All of this is designed to help us -- "Abide in me." If we do that we are fulfilling this active, necessary decision of the will to obey him and to do what he says, and to stay in touch with him.

This is what Bible study and prayer are all about. They are not mere mechanical practices which even

Christian ought to do in order to stay "in" with the crowd, or to maintain his "membership card," or "brownie points" with God! No, they are means by which we know him. If you open your Bible and read it without the conscious expectation that it is going to tell you something about him, you will not know him. If you try to pray as though it were some exercise in which you chalk off fifteen minutes' worth, or going through a list like the turning of a prayer wheel, it is a valueless experience. But if you pray

performing miracles. But there was no life in him. He did not abide in Christ, and Christ did not abide in him. As a result he was cut off, and he withered. The withering process was very short in his case. He died by suicide within a few days, and he was burned -- eternally lost. This is a picture of those church members who, despite attending church, never have any manifestation of truth, never have any sign in their lives of the quality of love and forgiveness and understanding and compassion which is born of the Holy Spirit. Their lives are rigid and narrow and hard and harsh and condemning and difficult -- even though they say and do good things.

On the other hand, our Lord gives us the results of fruitbearing -- four beautiful manifestations.

First,

"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, this is the way we let him abide in us -- by asking whatever you will, and it shall be done for you." {John 15:7 RSV}

Answered prayer is one of the first signs of a fruitful life. It is not part of the fruit itself; it is the process which increasingly is becoming Christlike. The result will be, "Ask what you will..."

St. Augustine once gathered up this very truth in a beautiful way:

"Love God, and do as you please."

That frightens some people. All they hear is, "Do as you please." But it must be preceded by that very first step, "Love God." When you love God, then all that you do is touched and controlled by love, and love is the fulfilling of the Law. So you can do what you please when you love God. And if you are truly loving God, you can ask whatever you will. This is the glory of Christian liberty. Prayers are answered, growing out of that relationship of an obedient and a dependent heart -- leaving the process and timing to God. You cannot tell him when to answer your prayers. You cannot tell him how to answer your prayers. But he will answer your prayers when they grow out of this relationship.

Secondly, there is the demonstration of discipleship, Verse 8:

"By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples." {John 15:8 RSV}

God is glorified when his people manifest fruit, i.e., Christlikeness. You do not even have to do a thing to manifest that. You can be flat on your back in bed, sick, but manifesting a Christ-like spirit, and you are glorifying God by that experience. It is not activity which glorifies God; it is character, it is what you do, the way you react to a situation. Do you want to be known as a disciple of Jesus? Do you want to be recognized as one who follows Jesus? Well then, manifest fruit in your life by abiding in him, and let your life be a manifestation of discipleship. This is the way that manifestation of discipleship is accomplished.

A friend of mine passed through Palo Alto this week on his way to Colorado to participate in a very interesting project on a ranch. This ranch is owned and operated by a mutual friend and is designed as a guest-ranch for very affluent people. The man who owns it has a heart of concern for what he calls "the up-and-outer" people, those who are over-privileged, who have all too much of everything, yet to whom very few are witnessing the fruit of life in Christ. So he has designed this ranch for that purpose. People come and spend a lot of time staying a week or so at a time. There are no Bible studies, no meetings; it is a very low-key approach.

What the owner does is to go throughout the country and interview young people for the crew that will work on the ranch. He will interview perhaps 300 young people and from them select only 30. He asks them a series of questions:

- First, "Do you love work?" because they are going to have to work sometimes from seven in the morning until ten or eleven at night. He wants them to love their work.
- Then, "Do you love people, do you like to be with people and relate to them?" They must say

- that they love people.
- The third question is, "Do you love Jesus?"

If they can assure him that they love work, love people, and love Jesus, then they have a tremendous opportunity to work at that ranch.

When the guests arrive the crew simply relates to them and gives them the time of their lives. By evening the guests are all asking, "Where did you ever get this tremendous crew of young people? fantastic group they are!" And on the third evening the owner of the ranch sits down and says, "I have been asking about our crew. Let me tell you why they are the way they are." And he tells the three questions he asked:

- Do you love work;
- Do you love people;
- Do you love Jesus?

He says, "Now, it may seem strange to you that I should ask that last question. But I have learned young people who can ever stand up to this grueling demand, and can meet it with an unvarying spirit and gladness, with the kind of attitude that has so impressed you, are those who have learned to

From then on there are still no meetings, but invariably every week there are those guests who call "I want to know more about this." And there are conversions after conversions throughout the rest of the week -- because of young people who manifest by their lives that they are Jesus' disciples. They are his disciples.

The third result is the deeper experience of Christ's love:

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." {John 15:9-10 RSV}

Remember that earlier in the passage our Lord had said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" {John 14:15 RSV}. And from that we saw that obedience grows out of love. It is the love of Jesus that is "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" {Rom 5:5 KJV}, which awakens our love toward him and his response. When our hearts are moved by love it is easy to obey his word, for we obey the one who loves us. He adds here the ingredient that when we obey his word, keep his commandments, we will abide in his love. It becomes a continuing sense and experience of his love for us. So it is a complete cycle which keeps deepening and deeper experiences of love.

All of us have learned, one way or another, that love demands a response if it is to grow. If you love somebody, and reach out toward them, you can go only so far unless they respond to that love. If they respond just a little, then your love can reach out further, can deepen and grow. But if they remain unresponsive over the weeks and months and years, love finally is limited to that initial step of reaching out to them. But where love is responded to, it grows deeper and richer and truer, and eventually becomes a deepening experience. If you are not feeling the depth of love you would like to experience, one of the reasons is that you are not responding to the love which is already reaching out to you. That is why the New Testament says: Open your hearts, widen your hearts, be responsive -- love back. When you do that, then love goes into this deepening, quickening experience.

Then the last result of fruitbearing -- the fullness of joy, Verse 11,

"These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." {John 15:11 RSV}

His joy, the joy that was always there at the bottom of his heart, that gladness of relationship with him is now to be our experience. Joy, that sense of gladness of relationship with him, will increase as we

I love the saying, "Joy is the flag which flies over the castle of the heart when the King is in residence." What joy is -- this sense of our unity with Jesus, the sense of his power, his adequacy, his ability to solve the problems which are thrust upon us. Let all that be present in the heart, and the face will light up.

That is what Jesus is talking about. "Abide in me, and I in you," and you will be fruitful -- without ceasing -- manifesting the characteristics of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit, the quality of life which is life. When that happens, there will come these additional benefits:

- Answered prayer,
- A glorifying of the Father through the demonstration of discipleship,
- A deepening of the experience of love, and joy made full.

What a wonderful relationship our Lord taught us here by this lesson of the vine!

Prayer

Our Father, as you have been walking through your vineyard this morning, you have been looking at various vines growing here. On some, Lord, you see sucker shoots which need to be pruned away. We thank you for your faithfulness in being at work to do that. On others you see luscious, tempting, delicious fruit which gladdens and delights your heart, glorifies you, and we thank you for that. We know that your work with us is to the end that we may produce more fruit, that all of us here in this vineyard will be so fruit-laden, that it will be a fruitful place which will make the world around us drool with desire to learn the secret of such fruit. We thank you for these possibilities which we have in Jesus Christ our Lord. We pray in his name, Amen.

Title: God's Vineyard
Series: Secrets of the Spirit
Scripture: John 15:1-11
Message No: 6
Catalog No: 3126
Date: June 10, 1973

LOVE AND HATE

by Ray C. Stedman

In our study we are now looking at the words our Lord spoke to his disciples as they left the Upper Room and made their way across the Kidron valley and through the hillside vineyards into the shadows of Gethsemane garden. In Chapter 15 we have his assessment of the three major priorities of life. All of us are concerned about priorities, about what comes first, what to do next, etc., and this passage sets forth, in order, the fundamental priorities of life.

First, above all else, in Verses 1 through 11 of Chapter 15 you have the Christian's relationship to God. That is of supreme importance. If this area is hurting in your life, stop everything else you are doing and straighten it out! Because if you go on in that condition you are going to hurt not only yourself but others as well. It is so important that you maintain this relationship, which our Lord puts in the simple words, "Abide in me, and I in you" {John 15:4a} -- that basic, fundamental identity of the believer. "Abide in me, stay in me, and let me stay in you"; everything else will flow from that.

The second and third priorities of life are found in the remainder of the chapter and the first four verses of Chapter 16. The second is our relationship to other believers. That is expressed in the words, "Love one another." The third is the relationship we have to the world outside -- a world which hates and persecutes the

yet toward which the attitude of the Christian is to be, as we shall see, one of patient witness. For the relationship to other believers Jesus said,

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. This I command you, to love one another." {John 15:12-17 RSV}

Notice that this paragraph begins and ends with the command of Jesus, "I command you to love one another." The fact that this is put in the imperative mode means it is not an option in our life. It is not something we feel like it. It is not an occasional action on our part. It is to be a deliberate response to another person whom we know to be in the family of God, regardless of how we feel toward that person.

Many people struggle at this point. They say, "How can you command love? Love is a feeling, and if you don't love somebody you can't help it. How can anyone command another to love someone he doesn't love or to stop loving someone he does? Love is our master; we do not master it." Those who speak in this way reveal a very serious misconception of love. Unfortunately we are victims of Hollywood in this respect. We think of love as a feeling we have of affection toward another, sometimes a very sentimental, romantic love.

But love, as Jesus employs it here, is far different. We can be sure of one thing: He would never command us to do what is impossible for us to do. The secret, of course, is that we are to love, he says, "as I have loved you." This kind of love is to arise out of the same kind of relationship that he had with the Father. The Father made it possible for him to love us. In this same manner, and from the same source, we are to love one another.

Negatively the New Testament says,

Don't challenge one another.
Don't complain against one another.
Don't devour one another.
Don't envy one another.
Don't judge one another.
Don't lie to one another.
Don't speak against one another.

And positively it says,

Accept one another.
Admonish one another.
Bear one another's burdens.
Bear with one another.
Build up one another.
Care for one another.
Comfort one another.
Confess your sins to one another.
Encourage one another.
Fellowship with one another.
Forgive one another.
Greet one another.
Honor one another.
Be hospitable toward each other.
Humble yourself toward one another.
Be kind to one another.
Love one another.
Be members one of another.
Pray for one another.
Be at peace with one another.
Have the same mind toward one another.
Seek after that which is good for one another.
Serve one another.
Show forbearance to one another.
Stimulate one another.
Be subject to one another.
Teach one another.
Be tenderhearted one toward another.

What a full range of relationships our Lord has caught up in this command that we are to love one another -- even to the extent of laying down our lives -- giving up our own comforts -- for one another!

The second mark of his kind of love is that it shares its secrets:

"No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." {John 15:15 RSV}

This is a remarkable statement. In the sense that he shares with them his life and the secrets of his heart, they have become his friends. Now, this is not the only relationship believers have with the Lord; they remain his servants, and a little later he refers to them as such: "The servant is not greater than his Lord." {John 15:20b RSV}. But in this sense we are friends of Jesus.

What do you do with a friend? The first mark of friendship is sharing. You tell him secrets and share

opportunities with him. If you get a hot tip on the stock market you call your friend up -- so he can see if it's any good! If you run into a bargain at a department store you share the news with your friend. If you have an opportunity to enjoy some unusual experience you call up your friend. Friendship is always marked by the sharing of intimacy.

Our Lord says that he has shared the secrets of his life with his disciples -- and with us. He tells us what the Father had told him about life, about death, about hell, about heaven, about relationships one with another, about history, about the world. He poured it all out, told them what he had known, what he had learned from the Father. This is the mark and characteristic of love.

In other words, he is talking about what here at PBC we have learned to call "body life." We are to love one another in the same way Jesus loved us. As he told his disciples what he had learned, so we are to tell one another what we have learned -- our struggles, our fears, our hopes, our experiences, all that the Lord has taught us by what we have gone through. If church is nothing more than a crowd of people coming together and listening to a speaker then it is no different from a convention or a conference on some secular subject. What makes it different is that we share our lives with one another. There is the unfolding of secrets, the bearing of burdens, telling of one another's needs, touching of one another's lives. This is what it means to love one another.

Some time ago I culled this from a church bulletin:

You ever feel like a frog? Frogs feel slow, low, ugly, puffy, drooped, pooped. I know -- one told me. The frog feeling comes when you want to be bright but feel dumb, when you want to share but are selfish, when you want to be thankful but feel resentment, when you want to be great but are small, when you want to care but are indifferent. Yes, at one time or another each of us has found himself on a lily pad, floating down the great river of life. Frightened and disgusted, we're too froggish to budge.

Once upon a time there was a frog, only he really wasn't a frog -- he was a prince who looked and felt like a frog. A wicked witch had cast a spell on him. Only the kiss of a beautiful maiden could save him. But since when do cute chicks kiss frogs? So there he sat, unloved prince in frog form. But miracles happen. One day a beautiful maiden gathered him up and gave him a great big smack. Crash! Boom! Zap! There he was, a handsome prince. And you know the rest -- they lived happily ever after.

So what is the task of the church? Kissing frogs, of course!

That is what Jesus is saying to us, isn't it? "Love one another."

The last element of this love is defined as the bearing of fruit in one another's lives through prayer.

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide; so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you." {John 15:16 RSV}

As you put this all together you see that the mark of love he is talking about is the bearing of fruit through prayer. The context is still the example of love which he set. This is what he did -- he prayed for his disciples and will pray for them again, as recorded in the seventeenth chapter, and thus bear fruit in their lives. The view here is, as we have seen all along, Christlikeness. It is the character of Jesus, the compassion, the gentleness, the tenderness, the forgiving quality, the courage, the strength, the beauty, the grace. This is what we are to bear, not only in our own lives but in one another's lives, by means of prayer. To pray for one another we help each other bear the fruit of Christlikeness.

This is why the epistles remind us to pray for all saints, to make supplication for one another, to love one another. This is the means by which we love one another. And this is our Lord's command. We are not to reach out to one another with disdain or with separation but are to reach out in this way toward one another.

At a Christian gathering the other day I heard someone, speaking of another, say, "I can't stand to be around her and I don't want anything to do with her!" That is a violation of our Lord's command to love one another.

Love means to give yourself for another, to give of your life and strength and time for another. Love is to share with and teach one another what you have learned. And love means to pray for one another. Jesus says that "if any man says, 'I love God,' but hates his brother, he is a liar," {1 Jn 4:20 RSV}. If we love God, we are also to love one another. This is the great command which makes the difference between the church and the community of those who love each other, and the world around us, which essentially neglects and is indifferent to one another. This is what makes the Christian witness, as we will see a little later.

In the next section our Lord goes on to point out the priority and the relationship of the Christian witness to the world around him. He begins with the attitude of the world toward the Christian:

"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." {John 15:18-19 RSV}

It is remarkable that our Lord moves quickly from his words about love for one another to this world and the hatred of the world toward the Christian. The world, as our Lord is using the term, refers to secular society, which is not humanity. Humanity does not hate the church; it is the world which hates the church, and the church is hated by the world. The world is organized society, without God, but with its own morals and standards and systems. It is what we ordinarily call "the system," and it is what hates the believer and wants nothing to do with him.

The world, as our Lord says, both hates and loves. It loves what conforms to it; it hates what differs from it. We have all experienced this. We know that even in small, nonreligious matters the world can hate that which does not conform to it. I read the other day that the man who invented the umbrella was pelted with rotten eggs and vegetables and stones when he first tried it out on a public street. No one else had ever seen it before. So the world loves to destroy that which does not fit its pattern.

This is why the Scriptures urge us to not be conformed to the world around us: Do not let the world shape you into its own mold -- for it desperately dislikes anything which differs with it, and will try to crush you. If we do conform to the world, if the church is worldly (and this does not mean doing certain things, but it means having certain attitudes), if the church trusts in its own power and seeks for prestige and approval, if it acts as though God does not add anything to it, then the world loves the church. It will pat it on the back and praise it and exalt it. But it dislikes and hates and stands against any church which is true to its Lord.

Our Lord points out that not only will the world hate, but it will persecute the church:

"Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than His master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also." {John 15:20 RSV}

Not only does the world hate the believer, but it also actively acts to get rid of Christian faith, Christian teaching, and even Christians. This has been demonstrated all through history. It may surprise some to know that, among all the twenty centuries since our Lord was here, the century which has seen the most vicious, violent persecution of Christians is not the 1st but the 20th. More Christians are being hated and destroyed, their goods and homes confiscated, their persons attacked and mistreated, in this century than in any other century. We think immediately of those in Russia and other Communist countries. Communism always hates Christianity, and those who stand for it and are committed teachers of it are always hated and persecuted for destruction whenever a Communist government takes over.

Nevertheless, Jesus says, some will receive: "If they kept my word, they will keep yours also." This is an encouragement to the witness of the church -- that not all will hate, not all will persecute. Some will believe, some will give heed and respond, as they did with Jesus. From these words we understand that the church need never expect to win the masses of people to Christ. Jesus didn't. The tremendous witness he gave to the nation in his day did not win the majority to himself. The witness of the church will have the same effect.

Our Lord goes on to give us the reasons for the world's attitude. He sets out the first in Verse 1:

"But all this they will do to you on my account, because they do not know him who sent me." {John 15:21 RSV}

The first reason for the attitude of hatred and persecution is that of ignorance. The world does not know him. It does not understand him. It thinks of him in a way which is distorted and twisted. It thinks of him as an arbitrary ruler, a huge judge or policeman -- if it thinks of him at all. It does not know his compassion, his forgiveness, his tenderness, his patience, his willingness to work with the slightest response. So the world, in its ignorance, persecutes God. Jesus describes this very ignorance in Verse 2 of Chapter 16:

"They will put you out of the synagogues; indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God." {John 16:2 RSV}

That is how blind they are. They actually think that in doing this they are worshipping God, for the words "offering service" mean. They think they are worshipping God by persecuting and killing Christ. This was true during the early days of Christian persecution, during the days of the Inquisition, and is true today in many many ways and forms. Of course, there is no greater example than Saul of Tarsus, a brilliant young Pharisee who was burning with threats and hatred in his heart toward the early Christians. He persecuted them and thought he was actually serving God, pleasing God in this way. Later on when Paul the apostle he tells us, "I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief," {1 Tim 1:13 RSV}

We Christians need constantly to bear in mind how ignorant the world is. It does not know truth and does not care for it. It talks as though it knew great and startling truth. But when it comes right down to a confrontation with the truth as it is in Jesus, the world is abysmally ignorant and does not understand itself or life or God about it. That is why it persecutes.

But there is a second reason, and Jesus goes on to point out the deliberate rejection which persists even though ignorance has been taken care of:

"If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates me hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. It is to fulfil the word that is written in their law, 'They hated me without a cause.'" {John 15:22-25 RSV}

Now ignorance has been met; the light has come. As John says in the early part of his gospel, "The light came into the world, and men still loved darkness rather than light, because their works were evil," {cf, John 3:19}. Knowing the truth, they rejected it. This is further evidence of the enmity of the world. Jesus came and spoke words of truth; he came and did deeds of love. What he said revealed what things really are, took away the veils and illusions, and revealed truth, reality. What he did revealed the Father, the kindness, the compassion, the healing ability, the qualities of God. But as people saw his works and heard his words, as we know, they rejected them, and this resulted in increasing hatred and violence, culminating at last in the crucifixion, in their nailing him to a cross. And, as he said, there was no excuse: "They hated him without a cause."

What is to be the attitude of the Christian to this kind of a world in which we still live? Our Lord's answer is found in Verses 26-27:

"But when the Counselor [the Comforter, the Strengthener] whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning." {John 15:26-27 RSV}

Obviously the primary reference here is to the apostles themselves, for they were with him from the beginning, but it also applies to us. He says, "When the Spirit of God has come, you will bear witness to this world is not to be left in its hopeless rejection of Christ -- even though it has resisted and rejected him."

knew it to be truth.

This is the work of the church today. May God help us as we seek to fulfill it in this 20th century

Prayer

Father, how many times have we sung those words, "Faith of our fathers, holy faith; we will be true to Thee till death." Lord, we pray that you will keep us in the midst of this unbelieving, rejecting world, and will help us to rejoice as we have the privilege of bearing witness to a crucified Savior. Let us do, Lord, as Jesus himself told us to do: "Rejoice and give thanks when men revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake." Lord, we ask that you will strengthen us and help us to reach out in love, one toward another, and to the weary world around us in their blindness and ignorance so that we may bear witness of Jesus Christ, our true and loving Lord. We ask in his name Amen.

Title: Love and Hate

Series: Secrets of the Spirit

Scripture: John 15:12 - 16:4

Message No: 7

Catalog No: 3127

Date: June 17, 1973

THE MESSAGE OF THE SPIRIT

by Ray C. Stedman

You who have been following through this series of messages know that as our Lord spoke to his disciples in the Upper Room, and on the way to the Garden, there were two great themes which occupied his mind. The first was to reveal to them the secrets of his own life, the great principles which enabled him to do what he did, to act in the unforgettable way which was his. The secret, he said, was his relationship to the Father. The Father was in him, and he was in the Father. The second great theme he was seeking to impress on his disciples was the relationship they would need in order to handle life after he had left them. It would be the coming Holy Spirit who would make available to them the same principle of life by which he himself lived. Then it would be the Son in them, and they in him. This was to be the secret of their life. So this passage deals with the ministry and message of the Holy Spirit.

This is the theme we will be looking at particularly this morning. Our passage opens with a new period beginning in the middle of Verse 4, Chapter 16, as indicated by the Revised Standard Version. After Jesus has revealed the hostility of the world which the disciples would face after he left them, the persecution, judgment and death they would be up against, he now says to them,

"I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you." {John 16:4b-7 RSV}

This passage opens with a manifestation of the need of the Spirit of God. It is revealed to us in the hearts of these disciples. Our Lord has indicated to them that there were certain things he did not say to them from the beginning. He did not tell them of the hostility of the world. He did not tell them about the tremendous opposition and persecution they would face. Nor did he tell them how to meet it. And he says why he did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you." There he indicates our need of the Spirit of God to be kept and supported and strengthened. He was keeping these disciples himself. Since they had no need to know all that he was keeping them from, or how it was done. "But now," he

going away. Now you'll need to understand what has been happening."

There he reveals to us the basic need of our humanity: to be kept. This is what the Scriptures teach ourselves -- that we are basically born to be dependent on something or someone else to keep us able to handle life by ourselves. No one is. The Big Lie, which has been circulated since the fall of man is independent, that he does not need anything, that he can be self-sufficient. He can run his own life, make his own decisions, and is able to handle everything himself. How widespread that notion is! It is reflected everywhere -- especially among youth, who are confident that they know how to handle life. He is going to trap them, or trick them, or deceive them. They are able to handle whatever comes. How wrong that is! Our Lord indicates here that these disciples had been able to exist only because he was with them and kept them.

And now, as he leaves, they are occupied not with what he has told them but with themselves. But he says, "I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?'" it is evident that our Lord expects these men to question him. He is attempting to arouse their curiosity. He is saying to them, "don't you ask me some questions? Aren't you interested in what is going to happen, what the result of my going away is going to be?" Instead, all they can think of is what it might mean to them. They are preoccupied with themselves, just as we are, and can see only their own little world. And so, as he says, "Sorrow will fill your hearts." Instead of curiosity, and the consequent knowledge they could have, and even the eagerness to know about what is going to happen, sorrow has filled their hearts and they are occupied with themselves. The revelation this is of what we are! We need someone to keep us. Now, that Someone who keeps us is the Holy Spirit, as our Lord goes on to indicate:

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth. it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you, but if I go, I will send him to you."
{John 16:7 RSV}

I know that you have often felt, as I have, that these disciples had a great advantage over us. To be with Jesus, to hear his words, to see his face, to see how he acted, to be with him in the midst of his life, to walk with him and listen to him and watch him -- what an advantage they had! How many of us have said, "Oh, if only we could have been there, if only we could have seen what these disciples saw!" Yet Jesus was telling them very frankly and very plainly and very truthfully, "Look, it is going to be better for you when I leave. It will be better for you when I go away, for when I go away the Strengthener will come." I know the translation of the word. It is the Strengthener, the One who meets our needs from within, who is the Spirit. That is what these disciples needed, and what we need.

I know it is hard for us to believe that it would be better for Jesus' disciples when he had gone. But I have never noticed in reading through the Gospels that when Jesus ~~finished on the Mount~~ ^{finished on the Mount} even this Upper Room Discourse, or any of his great messages which the disciples heard, that they ever went away with their faces aglow, their minds understanding, their hearts committed, and ready to work? In fact, the record tells us that every time he talked to them he puzzled them. They were perplexed, they could not understand him out, and they went away arguing about what he had to say. They were full of questions, and they argued among themselves as to who was going to fulfill these things, vying with each other for first place. It was not until they discover that after the Day of Pentecost, when the Spirit came, when they gathered together and listened to the words of the Lord they went away tremendously strengthened and encouraged, ready to face life with new faces and joy in their hearts. That is what the Spirit does. It was indeed to their advantage, and to our advantage, that Jesus was not with them. Suppose he were here in the world today, right now, July 15, 1973. Where would he be? Well, probably somewhere in Texas! But certainly not in Palo Alto! And how would you ever have access to him? Yet by means of the Spirit we have access to him, as these disciples never had.

Now our Lord goes on to point out the ministry of the Spirit, the way he would work when he came. This is one of the most helpful passages in Scripture to enable us to understand the workings of the Holy Spirit in our day, in our generation. He says to them, Verses 8-11,

"And when he comes, he will convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment [The ministry of the Spirit to the world is to convince them of these three things]

of sin, because they do not believe in me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more, of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."
{John 16:8-11 RSV}

I wonder if there is any verse of Scripture more frequently misread than that one. It is very common and most of us read it as though the Holy Spirit is going to come into the world and work directly

absolutes, no standards. Whatever anyone wants to do is right for him to do. There is nothing in

First Jesus emphasizes the prerequisite to learning. He says to these disciples, "I have yet many things to tell you, but I cannot say them now, for the Spirit of truth is coming upon you, and he will guide you into all the truth." Why didn't he say them? What was hindering him? The answer, of course, as he says, is that they couldn't bear them then. It would have been laying too heavy a load on them. It would have been a load greater than they could fulfill, and so he refused to lay it on them. What were they lacking? They were lacking the understanding of the resource upon which to draw. They did not know how to handle these things, how to satisfy these requirements, and so Jesus would not tell them these things until they had the prerequisite to respond.

That is a very important consideration. Today there are many conferences and seminars and meetings held in which great biblical truth is being set before people. But they are not always being told how to respond to it. The only response they know is to summon up their natural commitment and their natural strength and try to do the best they can to fulfill it. When that happens it always destroys people without their knowing why, because what they are told to do is right, but they don't know how to respond to it correctly. It is so important for us to understand that you have to know how to respond by faith and trust in the Spirit of truth within you, before you ever learn of the demand which the truth of God makes upon you. That is the prerequisite to learning.

Then Jesus goes on into the process, and the three divisions he gives are most helpful. "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth." The word *guide* means "to lead," like a tour guide, a tour conductor. I was recently in Hawaii and visited the city of refuge, the ancient site where the Hawaiian kings had erected a city which, like the biblical cities of refuge, was a place where those who had accidentally killed someone, or violated a taboo, could run from the revengeful relatives or the avenger of blood to justice. Once they had attained the shelter of the city, they were safe.

right for your situation. For back of him lies all the limitless power of God.

That is what he is teaching us. That is what the world is waiting to see in our lives -- power, come with some spectacular flash which startles and scares everybody, but released in useful quantity. That is the need. I'm like these disciples -- a brother to them. I cannot bear the full revelation of the love and life of Jesus Christ. I need to have it broken down to my size. But it is there, ready for me to take, ready to be used in my situation.

That is available to each of us.

- So that the world, looking at us, can see the sin of not believing in Jesus. He is the issue.
- So that they can see the righteous conduct which God alone can produce in a life.
- So that they can know that God is still in control of history, that all of history is trending toward a great event which lies yet in the future.
- So that they can see in us that quality of life which makes life worth the living.

That is what the Spirit of God is come to do.

He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. {John 16:14 RSV}

Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank you for the truth of these words. How much evidence we have right here in this room that these words are true, that this is what you are doing today -- to show that the world in its blindness and darkness may see you, Lord of Life, Lord of Glory, the One in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, the key and secret to life itself, and that they may come to you and receive life at your hand. We thank you for that and for the power given to us by the Holy Spirit. Help us to walk in these ways. In his name Amen.

Title: The Message of the Spirit
Series: Secrets of the Spirit
Scripture: John 16:4-15
Message No: 8
Catalog No: 3128
Date: July 15, 1973

THE ABIDING PRINCIPLES

by Ray C. Stedman

We return once again to our study of the time our Lord spent with his disciples just before the cross, teaching them marvelous and precious truths. In this passage we have seen some tremendous things that he has brought out for their understanding, and for ours as well. He has told them that a replacement himself was coming to them -- the Holy Spirit. Another Comforter, another Strengthener was on his way. When he came he would no longer merely be with them but he would be within them. Their strength would no longer come from without, as when Jesus was their Comforter, but would come from within.

Thus he marked the prominent characteristic of the day of the Spirit, in which we live. He told them that the primary work of the Spirit would be to take the life of Jesus and release it to these believers. This is the marvelous truth which the Scriptures seek to set before us. There is probably no greater truth in the Bible than this one. For, when the Spirit would come to release Jesus' life within them, they would live by him, as he lived by means of the Father. This is the fantastic secret which makes possible the

the high demands of Christian living. A Christian lives by the same principle as Jesus did. As he lived by the will of the Father, in dependence and trust in him, moment by moment, so we are to live by the will of the Son, in dependence and trust in him.

And he told them that when this happened, the Spirit would guide them into all truth, would gradually reveal to them the facts about life, the reality of existence, and would enable them to love one another. This is the qualification which is so necessary as the mark of Christians -- and to bear much fruit and to glorify the Father, to be Christ-like in every situation, and to endure the world's hatred and resist the opposition and persecution which would come. All of this has been covered so far in this discourse.

While he had been speaking they had left the Upper Room and, passing through the vineyards on the eastern side of Mount Zion, our Lord and his disciples have come around the city walls into the very shadow of the Temple. As this talk is coming to a close, they are about to cross over the Kidron Valley and make their way down the Mount of Olives into the darkness of Gethsemene's garden. At this point our Lord resumes a conversational style in his address to them.

It interests me to watch Jesus with his disciples and to observe his method of teaching. Sometimes he teaches rather formally and at some length, as in the Sermon on the Mount. But here he intersperses the formal teaching with opportunities for questions and discussion. He is so anxious to clear up their doubts that he now gives them an opportunity to break in with questions. Verse 16 introduces this section:

"A little while, and you will see me no more; again a little while, and you will see me." Some of his disciples said to one another, "What is this that he says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me'; and, 'because I go to the Father'?" They said, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We do not know what he means." Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him; so he said to them, "Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, 'A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me'? Truly, truly, I say to you, [that mark of great significance in the words of Jesus] I will see you again, but you will be sorrowful and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. When a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she is delivered of the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world. So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you." {John 16:16-22 RSV}

Notice that the concern of the disciples here is on how long this absence is going to last. Jesus had

This morning we had a dedication of children. I don't know if you could see them plainly from where we were sitting, but, when their babies were being dedicated, the faces of the mothers were a picture that were "turned on" with the gladness of that moment. What was causing the joy? The baby. Yet a few years ago those same mothers were in anguish and pain, and their faces pictured that anguish. And what

as though you were that person. This means we are to ask for what Jesus would want, what he not for our own desires. Prayer is not a means by which you get God to do what you want. It ne Prayer is a means by which God does through you what he wants, and it is a very necessary part process that you pray. James tells us, "You have not because you ask not," {Jas 4:2b RSV}. Praye integral part of that process. We must ask. But James also says, "You ask and do not receive, bec wrongly, to consume it on your passions" {Jas 4:3 RSV}, your own desires. Rather, it is to be for objective God has in your life.

Now, that permits a vast range of prayer! There are many things God wants you to have, and you right to ask. This covers material things as well as spiritual blessings. Jesus taught us to pray, "G day our daily bread" {Matt 6:11, Luke 11:3}, and there is nothing wrong with that. There is nothing with asking for other material needs. Some people get the idea that prayer is just for spiritual ble is not so. But what you ask must further the objectives God has in mind.

Second, to pray "in Jesus' name" means an acceptance of the process by which God works, and v relied upon. That process, as we know, is the cross and the resurrection -- i.e., a cross which rep end, the hopelessness of everything else, and a resurrection beyond it, beyond what could possib anticipated by men. That is the way God works. He is a God of resurrection!

That is why God often pushes us to the very limit before our prayers are answered. We cry out, don't you answer? If you would just step in now you could stop all this tragedy which is occurring sometimes doesn't stop tragedy. He is a master of brinkmanship. He pushes you right to the brink over the brink, in order that out of what appears to be an absolutely hopeless condition, from ma view, he may restore the whole thing.

This is the kind of God you are dealing with. You can expect him to act this way because this is w he will do: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lo 55:8}. And Peter reminds us, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you, as though something strange were happening to you," {cf, 1 Pet 4:12}. No, no; this is God's working. If he pushes you to the brink, don't be surprised, for resurrection lies beyond.

The third element of praying "in Jesus' name" is to pray in dependence upon his performance, up activity. It is Jesus who will do these things. He says so! "Whatever you ask in my name, I will do Father may be glorified in the Son," {John 14:13 RSV}. It is not done by our scurrying around trying arrange things and work them out for ourselves. It is done by our reliance upon him to carry it th own unique way.

Therefore, to ask "in Jesus' name" is to consent to those three elements of prayer. That is the w brought to the full, the way sorrow is turned into joy.

In the next section, here, our Lord underscores another great principle by which the Christian life lived, beginning with Verse 25:

"I have said this to you in figures; the hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in figures but tell you plainly of the Father. In that day you will ask in my name; and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from the Father. I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and going to the Father." {John 16:25-28 RSV}

Up to this point in the disciples' lives, they had been very much aware of this marvelous, unique r which Jesus had with his Father. They had noted that he had a dependence upon the Father, a tr Father, and a fellowship and communion with the Father which they knew nothing about. They ha upon Jesus to obtain for them privilege and favor with the Father. "But now," Jesus says, "that m are no longer to look upon yourselves as separated from the Father, nor to think that I have a spe him which you cannot know. This is now brought to an end, for the Father himself loves you dire

he loves me."

And notice why -- not because you behaved, but because you believed. That is so important! I find Christians who really feel that God owes them something because they have behaved well, have trouble with what he says. They feel that if they live a good, clean, moral life, God therefore owes them some special treatment. I am tempted this way myself, as I am sure you are. When trouble strikes, I have heard people say, "Why should this happen to me? How come God sent this to me? What have I done to deserve this?" We are ready to cry out and to tell God, "It's not fair, Lord! Here I've been working for you and he has let me out, and this is the way you treat me! It's not fair!" But, you see, it isn't on the basis that you believe he loves you; he loves you because you believe. You believe in Jesus, and, on that basis, his love is manifest to us as a Father's love -- directly to you. We used to sing in Sunday school,

Near, so very near to God, nearer I could not be;
For in the Person of His Son, I'm just as near as He.
Dear, so very dear to God, dearer I could not be;
The love with which He loved His Son, such is His love for me.

This is what Jesus wants us to know. We have a direct relationship with the Father, and his love is as it was toward Jesus. He loves us!

The past few weeks I've had the joy of having my eleven-year-old daughter travel with me, and Laura and I have spent a lot of time together. We have studied and prayed and read together, and played together. We had a great time! I seized the occasion to teach her how to get up in the morning. Do you fathers teach your children how to get up in the morning? Not only to get up, but how to get up? There is a third technique in getting up:

- First, we stretch. That gets the body going.
- Then, smile. That puts the soul in the right attitude, so that we don't start the day grumbling.
- And then say, "God loves me," because that sets the spirit right.

You are reminding yourself of your identity in that way, and -- body, soul, and spirit -- you are starting the day right. Stretch, smile, and say, "God loves me." That is what Jesus is saying here.

The second great source of security in the Christian life is this remarkable love which the Father has for all individuals. The Father loves us!

The last division, beginning at Verse 29, stresses a third word:

His disciples said, "Ah, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure! Now we know that you know all things, and need none to question you; by this we believe that you came from God." Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, every man to his home, and will leave me alone; yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." {John 16:29-33 RSV}

Notice that the security of these disciples rested on the ability they thought they had to understand what Jesus was saying to them. They wanted to know, and then they thought they would feel at peace. "Now we understand," they said, "now we understand." Jesus had been speaking to them in figures -- the vine and the branches, the washing of the feet, the woman in childbirth, etc. -- these illuminating figures. "But now you're speaking plainly. Now we know and understand that you are indeed from God." They felt a sense of security that they had not felt before. They understood that.

This is so like us! We think that God has to explain what we're going through, and that then we'll feel at peace. Our peace wants to rest upon a certain knowledge of what is happening. But our Lord is very careful.

know all things. Do you know that within an hour's time you will be so confused and so uncertain happening you will run away and leave me alone? Rather than trusting me to work things out, you me and not want to be identified with me. And yet I'll not be alone. My security won't be threatened hour, for the Father is with me. And I say this to you in order that you might know the kind of peace is not based on what happens, or even on my understanding of what happens, but upon a trust in God who controls what happens. I say this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you're going out, nothing but trouble -- trouble at work, trouble at school, trouble in your home, trouble in your family. I have nothing but trouble, because that is the way this world is. But be of good cheer. I am in control of this world. I have overcome the world."

Isn't that an encouraging word? I want you to know that these words have meant a great deal to me in the past few months and years. I've been going through a time of great personal stress, times of deep grief, times of great pressure, times of uncertainty and lack of understanding, not knowing what God is doing, perceiving him to be working in ways which I have thought were utterly wrong, thinking he was in the business doing things like this to me. And I've had to rest back upon these tremendous revelations. I have found a word, and upon these marvelous summary words -- love, joy, peace. They are the fruit of the Spirit. Do you have them?

His joy, despite circumstances, sorrow turned into joy. His love, the Father's own love, the Father's care, lovingly apportioning to each day that which he wants for you. Just last week in Colorado Springs I enjoyed hearing again the words of that old song, Day By Day. I had forgotten the words, and the new and fresh power:

Day by day, and with each passing moment,
Strength I find to meet my trials here.
Trusting in a Father's wise bestowment,
I've no cause to worry or to fear.

Our Lord now tells us why he needs this additional glory. The Father had already glorified him, and glorify him again in his death. But the Lord, evidently, is looking on beyond the cross. And he needs additional glory for the reason he gives in Verse 2: "since thou hast given him power over all flesh eternal life to all whom thou hast given him." That is why he needs it -- in order to fulfill the addition which was given him -- that of giving eternal life to all whom God had called.

There is something very significant here. Our Lord is pointing out that, in his resurrection and ascension will have, and does have, power over all flesh. That means he is in charge of all things. As he himself said before he ascended to the Father, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me," {Matthew 28:18 RSV}. The writer of Hebrews says that the Son upholds the universe by the word of his power {Colossians 1:17}. So here it is evident Jesus is aware that he is Lord over all the universe.

Jesus is Lord, whether men know it or not. That means he controls all the events of history -- and the ordinary events of our circumstances, our everyday lives. I have to believe that he allowed me to slip the ladder yesterday and injure my foot because of some value he knew the experience would have for me. I do believe that. I believe that all events are ordered by the Lord. He uses even the animosity and the power of Satan against our race in order to accomplish his purposes and his will.

Yesterday Bob Larson and Dick Hillis gave us a very illuminating and helpful study on China -- what she is doing these days, where it is going, so far as anyone can tell, and what China is like today. Some of us were startled a bit when Bob read from Isaiah's prophecy (44:24 - 45:6) the words of God concerning a pagan king of Persia, whom he would raise up. He describes in detail how he would use him to punish nations and overthrow thrones and overpower kingdoms, though Cyrus did not know him personally. Bob drew a very vivid parallel between Cyrus and Mao Tse-Tung, illustrating the fact that God is using China and in the world to accomplish his purpose.

This is what our Lord means when he says here that he has power over all flesh, over all the nations, to regulate their affairs, power to raise them up and put them down, power to shut doors so that they are closed off from hearing the gospel in order to sharpen its desire for it, while other nations are all open to hear the gospel. All the events of history, all the events reported in our newspapers -- including Watergate -- have been allowed by the Lord as he regulates and runs the affairs of earth, in order to give eternal life to all those whom God has given him.

In other words, the focal point of all human history is right here. Every event finds its significance and contributes in one way or another to the great task God has come into the world to do: to give eternal life to men and women. By virtue of the power he has of

sharing the same salary, raising children, washing dishes and making beds, and expressing a little all that marriage is? No, no. Marriage is the knowledge of a person. That is what makes marriage. It isn't just living together; it is knowing each other, and coming more and more to know one another.

That is why many marriages grow stale. This process ceases, and people do not continue learning more of what is in another person. So many couples come to me who think that they have arrived. They have found out all there is to know about each other, and so their marriage appears to them dull. But they haven't arrived. The knowledge of a person is an infinite undertaking. What makes human life the discovery of what is in one another, who we are, and the sharing of it. And what makes eternal life the living is the discovery of God, the knowledge of him.

And this is the great gift which only Jesus Christ can give. Notice how exclusive is his claim. It is as he says, "No man can come to the Father but by me," {cf, John 14:6}. Those of us who are Christians must never give that doctrine up. We must never be willing to put any other approach to God on the level of Jesus Christ. We must never say that any person other than Jesus can lead men to God. For Jesus himself

process by which God brings to pass what he has already proposed to do. James tells us, "You have asked, and because you ask not," {cf, Jas 4:2b KJV}. If you do not ask, it will not happen, because it breaks through the plan which God proposes to bring it about. Therefore prayer is vital, and our Lord gives us this example for that which was already promised him. Prayer is always based upon the promises of God.

Let us look now at these words, "I glorified thee on earth," for here we see the basis of his request for additional glory. Our Lord says, "I glorified thee on earth, having accomplished the work which thou gavest me to do." Having arrived at the cross, he had finished one work; now another is about to begin. For this additional work he needs this additional glory, this return to his original status as the Son of God. The reason he can ask for it now is that he had finished the work which God had given him to do.

In the next few verses we have a wonderful look at Jesus' own evaluation of what he had accomplished. Was this work which God gave him to do, which he had now finished, and finished with satisfaction? Could he ask for more glory to accomplish the further work which lay before him? He tells us what he thought.

"I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them to me, and they have kept thy word." {John 17:6 RSV}

That is one part of it. Now he gives another, in Verse 7:

"Now they know that everything that thou hast given me is from thee; for I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me." {John 17:7-8 RSV}

The work he came to do was two-fold: "I manifested thy name to the men whom thou gave me," and "I have given them thy words." And in saying that he says, "I have accomplished the work which you gave me to do." There have been many books written about the life of Christ, and they are filled with commentary on the amazing things Jesus did -- the multitudes which followed him, the miracles he performed, the crowds which he witnessed, the healings, the compassionate words he uttered. But Jesus is saying here that his work was designed to reach eleven men. And having reached them he says, "I have finished the work thou gavest me to do." Isn't that amazing?

He says, first, "I manifested thy name to them." What does that mean? A name always stands for something. Your name stands for everything that you are and have.

When Elaine Smith, of Great Falls, Montana, became my wife, she took my name, and she literally took it for all I had! It wasn't much. I had saved up \$100 for our honeymoon. We spent it within the first week -- and we had to cash her bonds to get home! Even today when S
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The second was: "I have given them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them in truth that I came from thee; and they have believed that thou didst send me."

These convincing words are what he came to give these disciples. He came to teach eleven men a different way of life, a totally, radically different approach to living. Read the words of Jesus and you will see this. Take the words of ~~Jesus~~ ~~on the Mount~~ ~~whose~~ opening words reveal an entirely different approach to life than anything the world knows: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed, blessed are the persecuted. Blessed are the pure in heart, blessed are the merciful, and the peacemakers -- for theirs is a resource which the world knows nothing about. The kingdom of God, and all its resources, are available to them," {cf, Matt 5:1-12}

So he had described all this, and these disciples had caught on -- finally! The amazing thing is that they just barely caught on -- just before these words were uttered. If you look at Chapter 16, Verse 17, you will see this:

His disciples said, "Ah, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure! Now we know that you know all things, and need none to question you; by this we believe that you came from God." {John 16:29-30 RSV}

this prayer. In all the universe, Jesus is the only one who has authority to give eternal life, i.e., the knowledge of God, this mighty, amazing, marvelous, attractive, magnificent being who flung the worlds into existence and who designed us in all our human complexity. He is the one whom to know is to gain the greatest blessing in life. And the only one who has the right to give us that knowledge is Jesus. But that the Father has a part in this, too. He draws certain ones to him. God is at work throughout drawing us to him by various means. If you have a hunger for goodness, that is the drawing of the Father. If you have a passion for truth and honesty, that is the drawing of the Father. If you love the words of the Bible, you are attracted by who he is and what he says, that is the drawing of the Father, moving in you to Christ that you might commit yourself to him.

And these men had been drawn in that way. Isn't it amazing that out of all the multitudes that followed him throughout his three years of ministry, these are all that are left? Of the thousands who followed him from city to city, these eleven men are all who remain. But that is enough. It is to these that he now commends the kingdom which he himself has had. So they are dear to him because they are given to him by the Father.

And then he says that they are dear because "all mine are thine, and thine are mine." That is, not only the Father given them to him, but now they were his, they belonged to him. And so his concern reaches to them because they are his property, his ownership.

Written across the front of this auditorium are words which I read frequently because I think they contain some of the greatest truths in Christian faith: "You are not your own; you are bought with a price." You do not belong to yourself if you are a Christian; you belong to God. You haven't the right to run your life as you please. You haven't the right to make your own program and plans; he has: "You are bought with a price."

These men were bought with that price and belonged to him, and so they are dear to him.

The third reason is, "I am glorified in them." They were choice men because in them Jesus saw the way in which all the glory which is his due would be manifested. Just as a coach is glorified by the ability of the athletes he has trained, or a teacher by the achievements of the scholars who learn from him, so Jesus is glorified by these men. They would be the way by which the world would know who he is. That is what history has proven, isn't it. We have the Bible because of these eleven men. We read of Jesus because of them. He has been glorified before the whole world by these eleven men. So they were infinitely precious to him, and thus he prays for them.

Now, what did he pray? Notice that he prayed three things for them. He didn't pray for the world because none of these things could be true of the world. He prayed for the world later, on his cross: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do," {Luke 23:34}. But here he is praying for these men.

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These are the three things he prayed for these men who were dear to him:

- Keep them in unity;
- Keep them from destruction by the evil one; and
- Sanctify them by your truth.

Now let's look at them in more detail and in context.

Verses 11 through 13a:

"And now I am no more in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to thee. Holy Father, notice that -- Holy Father, keep them in thy name, which thou hast

Jesus, knowing this, prayed for these men. Notice what he prayed -- two very important things:

He said, "I do not pray that you would take them out of the world." Isn't that amazing? I remember Sperry Chafer, my dear professor at Dallas Theological Seminary (president and founder of that school) saying that as a young preacher he had had great controversies with those who held the Arminian view, i.e., that once you were saved you could be lost again. He would say to them, "If I believed as you do, I would erect a chopping block beside every altar. And as soon as anybody got saved, I'd pass their heads off. It would be worth it, rather than seeing them lost again once they had become Christians!"

really is. We must know it so clearly and strongly that even while we're listening to these alluring brand them as lies and know that they are wrong, even while we feel the flesh within us rise up and get involved with it and participate in it and not be different, we can say by the Spirit of God, "No my life to Jesus. Jesus is my authority. And he is my strength. By his grace and power I'll stand in of this world."

"Sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth." But if your Bible is closed, if you are not growing knowledge of the Word of God, it is only a question of time before the world will move in and take You will lose all the joy and vitality of your Christian experience.

Jesus lived this way himself. "As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the same way. "And for their sake I have sanctified myself" -- in order that they might have an example means to be sanctified, to live by the truth of God in the midst of a lying world, a sick and dying

This is his prayer for his disciples.

I hope every one of us is asking the Lord Jesus to pray for us this same way, to keep us in unity nothing may break up our fellowship, our membership one with another, and to keep us from the contamination of the world around us, the lies of the evil one who would destroy us.

"Sanctify us by thy truth." The Word is the truth.

Prayer

Our Father, our Holy Father, we pray as Jesus prayed that you will indeed do these three things in our lives. And if there are any among us who have not yet made this initial commitment to you, we pray that even now they will say, "Lord Jesus, let the world go its way; but I will be with you. I give myself to you." Then, Father, we ask you to keep us in unity, keep us from the evil one, keep us by thy truth, and help open our minds and hearts to this truth, so that we may glorify you. We ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

Title: Kept

Series: Secrets of the Spirit

Scripture: John 17:9-19

Message No: 11

Catalog No: 3131

Date: August 26, 1973

ONE BODY

by Ray C. Stedman

Today we complete our studies ^{Upper Room Discourses} and we look together at the great prayer with which Jesus concluded his message, particularly as it relates to the whole church down through

throughout the ages -- that there is one holy, catholic church. In the Apostles' Creed, recited even in many churches, is the phrase, "I believe in ... the holy catholic church ..." Many Protestants have taken that phrase, not realizing that the word "catholic" merely means universal -- one universal, world-wide, holy church -- not two or three, or three hundred fifty, which is the approximate number of denominations in the United States today, but one church. Our Lord recognizes this in his prayer.

This is a church which stretches not only around the world but across the centuries. I do not know if I ever thought about that, but it has always intrigued me to remember that I am a member of the church which the apostles belonged, and Martin Luther, John Wesley, David Livingstone, and all the other great ones of the past; that we are as much members one of another as you and I today are members one of another of Christ. The church is one body, one great, catholic church.

And it is entered, as Jesus indicates here, only by one means -- by faith in him -- "those who believe in me will have eternal life." It is so helpful to understand that. You do not join the church by signing a membership form, or by attending regularly, or by going through a baptism or a confirmation. These things have nothing to do with entering into the body of Christ. There is only one way -- by a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus himself. The words Jesus indicates how available he will be throughout all the course of the church age.

Remember what he said at the close of Matthew's gospel: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" {Matt 28:19a RSV}, "and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age," {Matt 28:20b RSV}. It is this fact which makes possible that personal entrance into the church -- a born-again relationship with Jesus.

Notice that Jesus says this is based upon the apostolic witness -- "those who believe in me through the word of the apostles." Many times I find people who attach little importance to the apostles and their writings -- especially the Apostle Paul. Many people are ready to reject Paul outright. In these days of "Women's Liberation" Paul is commonly regarded as the highest expression of a "male chauvinist pig" because of some of his statements about women. Evidently these statements are not clearly understood, for no one holds women in higher esteem than Paul. Nevertheless, there are many who reject the Epistles. But it must be clearly understood that these apostles are his chosen messengers, his chosen means of reaching the world. It underscores it at this point, that these apostles are his chosen messengers, his chosen means of reaching himself to a waiting world. And to reject their witness is to reject him. The only Jesus we know of is the Jesus of the apostles.

We are being presented today with many different Jesuses. There is the Jesus of the Superstar

Three times Jesus prays for the unity of the church. Note the gradual stages of growth:

- In verse 21 he prays, "that they may all be one";
- In verse 22, "that they may be one even as we are one"; and
- In verse 23, "that they may become perfectly one."

What is this unity? We hear a great deal these days about the unity of Christians. There is an effort been going on for some time now to bring about a union of believers, to unite them in one great church under the auspices of the World Council of Churches, or some similar organization. We are told that this will at last be the answer to this prayer of Jesus. But I find it impossible to accept that explanation. I believe that the church has to wait twenty centuries before the prayer of Jesus is answered, or that the World Council of Churches will accomplish what the Holy Spirit (seemingly) has been unable to do. I believe that the Holy Spirit has been answering this prayer from the very beginning, and when we understand the nature of the unity for which Jesus prayed we will see that the prayer is indeed being answered and has been answered.

What is the nature of that unity? Several things here in this passage give us a clue.

The first is in Verse 21 -- "that they may all be one." What does this "all" mean? If you look back in the previous section you will see that he prays, "not ... for these only." Who are "these"? The apostles, the eleven for whom Jesus has been praying in the previous section. He continues, "but also for those" who are to believe in him through the apostolic witness -- the great body of Christians around the world and through the centuries. "Those," he now says, are all to be joined together, "that they may all be one." In other words, the church is a unity with the apostles. We are to be made one with them. And since the primary task of the apostles was to give us the truth about Jesus, this unity is that of shared truth -- one faith delivered to the saints, one record about Christ, one set of beliefs about Jesus given by the apostles. Thus the first

Here then is the second level of unity -- not only shared truth, but shared power. The church is one and operates from the same resource and by the same direction -- by the name and the words of God and for the glory of the church.

Have you noticed that wherever the church begins to adopt the same means of operating as the world, it immediately loses its distinctiveness and its power? As soon as we begin to try to accomplish things through organizational techniques, by mobilizing human resources, and by raising funds -- as though money is the only thing which could accomplish what is needed -- the church immediately becomes nothing more than another worldly organization trying to make its impress upon society. But when the church remembers that it has a unique power which is absolutely different than anything else -- the power of the living God and the name of God -- and that it has the Word of God to direct it, there is a glory in the church which no other organization can possibly rival. It is entirely different. This is what Jesus prays for, that this kind of unity may be visible.

Then the third aspect of unity, Verse 23: "I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfect," is the glory of a shared life. Jesus in us, the Father in him, and thus, in the remarkable words of Paul, we are made "partakers of the divine nature," {2 Pet 1:4}.

Do you believe that? Do you ever think of yourself as linked with the life of God -- so much so that you cannot be known or understood apart from that life? One of the reasons why we Christians are so weak is that we do not really believe these magnificent claims about us which Scripture sets forth. We always think that it is someone else, to Paul and David and Abraham maybe, but not to us.

But God insists that we are the very ones whom he is talking about, that Jesus is in us, and God is in the Son, and thus the Trinity indwells us by the Spirit, and we are linked with the life of God. This is the understanding of that is what produces unity among believers. Here is what Jesus is praying -- that we may understand the sharing of truth, the sharing of power, and the sharing of life, and that thus the church may be one.

What is the purpose of this unity? It is a strange kind of unity. What is it all about, and why does it matter? Twice our Lord tells us -- once in Verse 21: "so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me," and in Verse 23: "so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and hast loved them even as thou hast loved me." First, that the world may believe something; and, second, that the world may know something.

First, that the world may believe that Jesus has come from God. When the church begins to demonstrate the unity of faith, the unity of shared truth, of shared power, shared life, the world is hit by an inescapable impression that Jesus is Lord, that he indeed holds the key to history and to reality, that he is indeed the revelation of the invisible God.

Now, the world may not accept this. That is another problem. But the purpose of the witness is not to convince everybody, but to give them a basis upon which they may decide. I think it is very important to understand that the world is not necessarily going to be convinced. Many will be, thank God. Many will understand when they see that Jesus is Lord, and accept him. As Paul said, referring to himself, he was the savor of life unto life to some, and of death unto death to others; but in any case, God was glorified {1 Cor 1:2:14-16}. Here our Lord reflects that same idea. Evangelism, you see, is really intended to give every man a chance to make an intelligent choice as to whether to accept or reject Jesus. It is to present before the world a unity so beautiful that the world will believe that Jesus is Lord. And, further, that they will know that Christians are loved by God as much as Jesus is loved by God. That is an amazing testimony, isn't it? This is what constitutes the reason for our witness before the world. As John R. Stott has so ably put it:

Our motive must be concern for the glory of God; not the glory of the church or our own glory. Our message must be the gospel of God as given by Christ in his apostles, not the traditions of men or our own opinions. Our manpower must be the whole church of God, every member of it, not a privileged few who want to retain evangelism as their prerogative. And our dynamic must be the Spirit of God, not the power of human personality, organization, or eloquence. Without these priorities we shall be silent when we ought to be voices.

So I think our Lord's emphasis on unity here is a tremendously helpful guide to our understanding process of evangelism and of witness before a waiting world.

In the last section of Jesus' prayer we have a request for the vision of the church:

"Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me in thy love for me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world has not known thee, but I have known thee; and these know that thou hast sent me. I made known to them thy name, and I will make it known, that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."
{John 17:24-26 RSV}

Jesus closes his prayer with a great, heartfelt expression of his desire that we may be with him who believe in his name, from the beginning of Pentecost until the end of time, may be with him. What a magnificent basis for our hope of heaven! And yet, as this makes so clear, heaven is made because we are with Christ. This is the hope of every believer, that one day we will be with him. "To depart and be with Christ is far better," {cf, 2 Cor 5:8-9}. And in many places Scripture brings before us. The joy of the Christian is that in heaven we behold the glory of Jesus, the face of Jesus, the manifestation of all the glory which is in him.

I never tire of reading about some of the troubles and tribulations of the church in the past. One period is that of the old Scottish Covenanters, who stood strongly against the persecution involved in the Church of England's attempt to stamp out the evangelical faith in Scotland. Among them was that Scottish leader, Samuel Rutherford. He was a gracious, godly man, and a great witness to the love of Christ. But he was placed in prison for his testimony, and while on his deathbed he was summoned by the king of England to appear in London to answer charges of heresy. Samuel Rutherford sent back a

in them, and I in them." The glory of Jesus is the glory of love -- the love of God for man. That is our hearts and changes our lives and makes us different people, forgives our sins, lifts us up again, encourages our hearts. It is the realization that God indeed loves us as he loved Jesus.

I remember the story of the little boy who entered a Sunday school contest in reciting Bible verses. The boy happened to be a cripple, a hunchback, who could hardly walk across the stage to recite the verses he had memorized. As he started to hobble across the stage as best he could, with his terribly humped back, a boy who had come in off the street thoughtlessly cried out, "Hey, crip, take the pack off your back!" The boy broke down in tears, and couldn't go on. A man came up out of the audience and stood beside him. He said, "I don't know what kind of a person would make fun of a little crippled boy, but I want to tell you this boy is. He's my son, and he's got more courage than any of you! And I'm proud of him, because he's mine!" And he picked him up in his arms and walked off the stage.

I think of that story often when I read a verse like this which sets forth the love of God for us. We can't understand how God could love Jesus -- who wouldn't love him? But it is difficult for us to believe that Jesus says here -- that we are to grasp the fact that in the manifestation of Jesus' life in us, God loves us that same way. In all our hunchbacked, crippled, broken, beaten condition, he stands beside us and says, "I'm proud of him; he's mine!" And he picks us up and carries us on through life. That is the glory which Jesus says we are to behold -- the glory of the love of God for us as individuals.

This past week I was in Michigan at a conference, and I heard a group singing "Near the Cross". My thoughts flashed back to a day in a park in northern Minnesota when I was just a boy fourteen years old. I had just come to know the Lord Jesus three months before, and the glory of his presence filled my heart. I remember sitting in that park, all alone, singing that song with tears running down my face:

Jesus, keep me near the cross,
There a precious fountain
Free to all -- a healing stream,
Flows from Calvary's mountain.

In the cross, in the cross,
Be my glory ever;
Till my raptured soul shall find
Rest beyond the river.

That is what Jesus is saying to us here. There is a hope of glory in the future, and a present availability of glory to us now, so that we may manifest a unity of love among ourselves which will cause a witness to be known -- even though they might not want to admit it -- that Jesus is Lord, and that God loves us as he loved his Son.

Title: One Body
Series: Secrets of the Spirit
Scripture: John 17:20-26
Message No: 12
Catalog No: 3132
Date: September 2, 1973

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