

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Studies in John's Gospel: Jesus' Farewell Words - John 14:1-14

Angina, blood clots, heart disease, heart attacks, all symptoms of the malfunctioning of the heart, and how often we hear of them today, they are one of the primary causes of death in this country. Today we are going to speak on the subject of heart trouble and to give the remedy of the greatest physician of all time, the Lord Jesus Christ. "Let not your heart be troubled" were his words to his disciples when He was about to leave them. They are the opening words of the John 14 when He spoke to them in the upper room immediately before His betrayal and arrest. In chapter 13 He had told them that He was about to leave them and such news would, of course, have made them very sad, but now in chapter 14 He sets forth the consolations that would comfort their hearts in view of His immediate departure and after it had taken place. He is not going to abandon them; indeed His going would be for their good. All the things that He had taught them, for example, that He was the Good Shepherd, that He had come to give life, that He was going to build His church, that He would make them to be fishers of men; these things were not about to be abrogated but rather ratified. He would have told them so if it had not been the case.

His first words are "Ye believe in God; believe also in me". That little word "in" requires a word of explanation. It is better translated "on" and it carries with it the thought of confidence. The Lord is really saying "Believe, yes, but not simply as a fact, but have a real faith in God and Me for keeping, strengthening, providing, indeed for everything that you need to continue as my disciples". Believing on is not simply for salvation but for our onward movement. But this brief statement also contains another vast and majestic truth, namely that God and Christ are one; Christ too is God, denied in His own day and denied by millions today.

The first word of comfort that he brings them is a promise, a promise that He will have them with Himself for ever and, moreover, in His Father's house, a place which He Himself is going to prepare. In it there will be many mansions or dwelling places and there will be room for all. There was no room for Him in the inn, but in the Father's house there is room for all. It is possible that the Lord may have had the temple, particularly Ezekiel's temple, in mind where there were chambers for the use of the priests. I have often wondered as to how, in what sense, the Lord will prepare such a place and I cannot say that I am sure what the Lord meant, but I offer two suggestions. Firstly, as He speaks these words He is upon earth, not in the Father's house and hence that blessed place is incomplete. He is going to dwell therein and then, and only then, will it be fully prepared – "That where I am" he says to them. Secondly I would ask my listeners to refer to Hebrews 9:23; Ephesians 1:4 and Colossians 1:20. Time prohibits a detailed analysis of these verses but they seem to indicate that the work of Calvary must be finished before the Father's house was ready. Consequent upon redemption it is not preparing them for a place but preparing a place for them.

Then He makes them another promise; "I will come again," He says, and moreover to receive them to Himself. What grace, what love, what condescension on the part of our blessed Lord. It has to be a very high foreign dignitary indeed that warrants a personal welcome by the queen, but the Saviour Himself, the Son of God, not an angel or even an archangel will come and conduct us personally into our eternal home. The details of our Lord's return for His own are given in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and it is well for us to have a clear understanding of this coming great event because there is much confusion of interpretation of the Scriptures which speak of His coming again. The difficulty arises because so many of the dear saints of God fail to distinguish between the passage already referred to and the passage in Revelation 19:17-21 where we find the Lord coming in power and glory to overthrow His enemies and to establish His kingdom upon earth. That kingdom which will last for 1,000 years. On this occasion He comes with His saints as Enoch prophesied centuries before and to which Jude referred in Jude 14, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints". Note that here He comes with His saints; in John 14 the Lord says that He is coming for them. The believer is to have his hope fixed upon this return of His Lord; Paul expected it in his day: "Then we who are alive and remain" he writes in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 "shall be caught up together ... in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord". Before the coming in glory the period of terrible tribulation, as recorded in the earlier chapters of the Revelation must first take place. You, my Christian friend do not look for that but for the prospect of being with the Lord. So patiently we wait for Him according to Philippians 3:20 and then our salvation will be complete according to Hebrews 9:28.

In 14:5 the Lord reminds them that He had told them of His approaching death and resurrection; that He had come from God and was going to God. They had acknowledged Him as the Son of God but they had failed to appreciate the extent of His mission and they are still in a state of great perplexity. Thomas voices the feelings of all the disciples by

asking the question; "Lord we know not where thou goest and how can we know the way?" Jesus answers with three I Am's; I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.

The Way.

The Lord is returning to the Father and His house and for all who would be there with Him, He is the way thereto. How necessary and indeed prudent that when we are contemplating a journey we know the path we have to take, especially if that journey passes through unknown territory. Scripture speaks of many ways or paths, for example; Jeremiah calls upon Israel to "ask for the old paths, where is the good way", and then exhorts them "to walk therein". Sadly Israel's response is, "We will not walk therein". Jeremiah 6:16. Proverbs refers to a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death. The much loved Psalm 23 tells us of the paths of righteousness into which the Lord leads His own and then again He speaks of the broad way which many travel and the narrow way and "few there be that find it". The prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 35:8 says, "And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass through it, but it shall be for these. Those that go this way – even fools – shall not err therein". Isaiah here is looking to that glorious millennial reign of Christ which will be a wonderful time for Israel upon earth, but here the Lord is speaking of the path to heaven and for that He is the way. But not only for the future, we do well to remember that for our spiritual lives now He is still the Way. Hebrews 10:19-20 exhorts us "Having therefore brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say His flesh...let us draw near". Then in Ephesians 2:18 we are told "that through Him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

The Truth.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the demonstration of truth as to all persons and things. When He appeared before Pilate, Pilate asked Him the question "What is truth"? Little did he realise it but truth was epitomised in the very person who was standing before him. Do we wish to know the truth about God, His holiness – His standard of righteousness? Then look at Jesus, listen to Jesus; here upon earth He was God's perfect representative. Would we like to know what God thinks about sin? What does the Lord say? "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. Philip asks the Lord to show them the Father. The Lord's reply is "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father". What about ourselves – how may we learn the truth about ourselves? What is the answer to the question posed in Psalm 8 and asked again in Hebrews 2? The answer is Christ Himself; "But we see Jesus". Let us look at Him and learn the truth about ourselves. He is the perfect man, not Adam, he is the fallen man. The Lord as the Truth highlights the extent of man's departure from God.

The Life.

The Bible, God's word constantly reminds us that man is spiritually dead and the reason is given in Romans 5:12; "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned". So Paul writes to the Ephesians that they were dead in trespasses and sins. But Christ is the life and if men are to receive it, it can only come through Him. What does the word of God say about Him? John 1:4 "In Him was life"; John 5:26, He has life in Himself; 1 John 5:20, "He is the true God and Eternal Life"; John 10:10. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly". He came to bring life and is Himself its very source. Finally to complete these few specimen quotations on Christ as the life I give Colossians 3:3 and 4; "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory". What confidence such a text gives to the true believer. Who can possibly doubt or question the certainty of one's salvation in the light of such verses?

These comforting words which the Lord is communicating to His disciples leads Him to speak to them of the Father. He had done so before but they had never fully grasped this new revelation. They were no doubt acquainted with Malachi 2:10 "Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us"? But here God is referred to as father in creation. What the Lord is saying is an entirely new concept for them and the Jewish nation. It reached its climax on the morning of the resurrection when the Lord commissioned Mary to go to His brethren and tell them that He was ascending "to my Father and your Father; to my God and your God". The Jews, no doubt, had an understanding of God as a composite being; their Pentateuch commences "In the beginning God", and they would know that "God" is a plural name; also they would know that God said "Let us make man"; In Psalm 2 they would have read of the Son; but I question whether they would have had a full comprehension of the Trinity. The Lord's ministry had brought fresh illumination as to the truth of the Godhead and perhaps particularly on the Fatherhood of God. John's writings, both his gospel and his epistles focus very much on the children of God, children of the Father. There is an intimacy with John. Paul, on the other hand, speaks more of sons. So it would appear that the Lord's spirit was grieved by Philip's request, "Lord show us the Father, and it sufficeth us". Philip had been led to Christ; he had led others to Christ but He had so to speak, still to reach the Father.

Despite all the Lord's teaching concerning the Father, the disciples were still in ignorance. And how many of the dear saints of God today have not gone much farther than the disciples. John tells us in his epistle that our fellowship is "with the Father": what a privilege to be able to speak with the Father as children: to make our requests to him knowing that He cares for us and only desires that which is for our blessing. These and many other things are embraced in the Lord's desire that we should know the Father.

So the Lord speaks to them plainly. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou, "Show us the Father"? Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I speak to you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works". He was in the Father – the Father was in Him. On a previous occasion He had told them, "I and my Father are one". He had so displayed the attributes and glories of the Father as He had been amongst them that all who had seen Him had seen the Father. Before His death He had always spoken of "Your Father which is in heaven", or "Your heavenly Father." He was addressing Jews, an earthly people and the Father was, so to speak, at a distance. But after His resurrection, whilst we continue to read of the Father and our Father He is no longer afar off and consequently we do not read of a heavenly Father. You see, dear fellow believers, we Christians are a heavenly people; God sees us as seated in the heavenlies in Christ; ours is a position of nearness, not distance. We ought to say, too, that the Father is an object of our worship. This was part of the Lord's teaching in John 4 when he spoke with the Samaritan woman at Sychar's well. "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him". Just think of that; the infinite, holy, eternal God – the Father is asking for something; and what is it – your worship and mine.

So He is going to the Father and is leaving behind a company of His disciples, His servants to carry on the works. But listen; what is this that He says: "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go unto my Father". Greater works! Impossible! But so the Lord says. And the Book of the Acts proves it to be so. Three thousand converts on the day of Pentecost under Peter's preaching, a great company of priests, the enemies of the Lord during His days upon earth, were obedient to the faith, the shadow of Peter heals the sick, handkerchiefs and aprons brought from the apostle Paul were instrumental in healing the sick.

But despite all these promised wonders they are but men, the flesh is still in them and they will need help, divine help. And their Master provides such. An unfailing power is at hand. The Father and Son are available through the medium of prayer; and so the promise is, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it". I think that we must be careful in interpreting this verse. It is not of private interpretation, it is not a blank cheque to satisfy all our desires and whims. Comparing it with other passages I think that we will find that prayer has conditions and all have to be fulfilled that the ultimate answer will be for the glory of God. I will mention some that I believe to be relevant to the subject.

1. The granting of our prayers must be for the glorifying of Father and Son, and not for our own satisfaction. James 4:3.
2. To this end, the Spirit prompts our prayers. Romans 8:26.
3. They must be asked in faith. Mark 11:22-23.
4. They must be asked in the Lord's name. This is not a kind of formula that is added to the end of our prayers. In doing so we identify ourselves with Christ in our requests.
5. They should be importunate. Read the parable of the unjust judge in Luke 18. A one-off request is not necessarily sufficient.

Heart trouble? How can a believer possibly be so afflicted as we listen to these words of our Saviour from the upper room. Rather like the two Emmaus travellers who listened to Him on the way, our hearts will be burn within us. May it be so for His name's sake.

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