

**Record of Sermons delivered during the month of**  
**March 2018**

(added progressively after each Sunday)

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(see following pages)

**Come, Know and Work for the Father Through Christ – Pt 2**

Per S Olyott

(Review of last time) -

It is two week's ago that we commenced this Chapter (14) of John's Gospel. We are part way through considering the first 14 verses.

In the introductory, first verse, Jesus anticipates the anxiety and uncertainty that is in store for His eleven remaining disciples, and speaks words of comfort. This follows through to near the end of the Chapter (verse 27).

He then sets about, firstly while still in the 'upper room' (to the end of Chapter 14) and subsequently during the walk through Jerusalem to the Garden of Gethsemane to prepare the eleven for what was to follow, in a series of discourses.

There are three topics in the 14 verses we have read:

**Coming to the Father by coming to the Lord Jesus Christ** (verses 2-6),  
**Knowing the Father through knowing the Lord Jesus Christ** (verses 7-11)  
**Working for the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ's working** (verses 12-14)

We will add a little to what we have already said about the second of these topics and then cover the third:

- Knowing the Father through knowing the Lord Jesus Christ.  
Philip has initiated this part of the discourse. "Show us the Father, and it is enough for us." He says on behalf of them all. Perhaps you can hear some exasperation in Jesus' reply as he starts by saying, "Have I been with you all this time and still you don't know who I am and that therefore if you have 'seen' me you have 'seen' the Father. I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Believe this! And if you can't believe this merely on my say so (yet by now you should) believe because of the works God does through me. Be assured I'm not speaking on my own authority. The Father who dwells in me does his works this way.  
I am in the Father and the Father is in me."

**Two separate Persons who are both equally and fully God, they are separate from each other as Persons in the God-head, and yet they are so intimately united and in such deep accord that One can be said to be in the Other!**

The disciples still hadn't fully grasped that Jesus Christ was God! They had verbalised it at Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:13-20), but they still hadn't grasped what it fully meant. The miracles – the works of God done by Jesus – should have been enough!

This second section is an important passage. It tells you the origin of Jesus' Words (verse 10) *The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.*<sup>1</sup>

The Words of Jesus are the Words of God. Every word which Jesus spoke He spoke because the Father, who sent Him and who dwelt within Him, moved Him to speak it. It's very important that we recognise the origin of Jesus' Words.

This second section is also important for another reason:

It shows to us that to know Christ is to know God the Father. Anybody who knows God, does so because He knows Christ. So our Lord is saying in another way what He said in the first section: that there is no way to God except through Christ.

Here is something that you may notice in the next week as you talk to your friends: If you talk to your friends about God, they may be quite willing to enter into a discussion with you. Generally people are not upset about talking about God. Because they can (and do) make up their own ideas about who He is. But speak to them about Christ and you are likely to meet strong reaction. Because there you'll be talking about a historical person. We know where He was born; where He lived; what He did; what He said; where He died and where He was buried. We know for certain from the evidence that He rose from the dead. So as soon as you start talking about Christ they feel intimidated and threatened.

But the fact still remains that we MUST speak about Christ, because it's impossible to know God, except by knowing Christ. And everybody who does know Christ does know God. Because there is no other God except Christ. This is the import of what our Lord is saying here.

He's saying this remember, as His parting words to His disciples.

- Now the third section verses 12-14: Talking about works leads very naturally to this next subject. **Working for the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ's working.**

Verse 12 has been the source of great controversy! Many arguments over its meaning. <sup>12</sup> *“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.*

*“Ah!” says somebody, “Jesus raised the dead. I'm a Christian believer. That person down the street has died. Jesus says that the works He does, I shall do also. So I'll knock on the door and I'll raise them from the dead!”* People have talked like that. They say, *“This person or that is ill, Jesus cured the sick by speaking to them or placing His hands on them. He said the works that He did I shall do also, so I will go and cure the sick.”* Throughout the centuries there have been various people who have gone to verse 12 and then walked out into the

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<sup>1</sup> The opinion can be expressed that there is a limitation in the use of printing the Words of Jesus in red in some 'red letter' Bibles. Should this have the effect of separating the Words of Jesus from the Words of God then it is to be regretted. Because the Words of Jesus are the Words of God.

world thinking confidently that **they** can work miracles. And disappointment is the real result.

What did Jesus mean, when He said to His disciples in His parting words: *'whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.'*?

It's the closing clause which is the important one.

***Because I'm going to my Father.*** “Don't think that because I'm bodily absent that there is going to be a drying up of power. I will continue to work but not as I now do, physically in the world. I will work from there! And I will work through Christian believers. It's because I'm going to the Father that there will be even greater things in the future.”

“Well”, says the 'somebody', “is that what happened?”

Yes! Throughout the period of the Acts of the Apostles these 'eleven' disciples who had heard Him say those words. Those very Apostles! They demonstrated that they really were Apostles by marvellous miracles and 'signs'. The dead were raised by the Apostles. The blind were made to see. The lame were made to walk. Deaf were made to hear. All sorts of wonderful miracles actually took place because of this eleven people who were in the 'upper room'. But remember that that group of miracles were given for a reason. God gave those sorts of miracles to prove that the people who exercised them really were His messengers, in that time and circumstance. When God had finished saying to the world all that He had to say the time for those special miracles ceased.<sup>2</sup>

But the verse remains to be true: ... *greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.*

As our Lord Jesus preached in the world, this one came to be a believer and the next and so on ... . Soon there were 12 then 70 others and eventually 'over 500'. So after three years of Ministry there were over 500 believers because of our Lord's preaching. But little more than a month and a half after this statement by Christ, Peter stood up to preach in Jerusalem and in one sermon 3000

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<sup>2</sup> The belief of this has continued to now. Being variously described as cessationism:

Garnet Milne's published dissertation (see article via the link below) in interpreting the final phrase of WCF 1:1 – 'has now ceased' – concludes:

The book concludes that the Westminster divines intended the cessationist clause to affirm that there was to be no more extra-biblical, “immediate” revelation for any purpose now that the church possessed the complete Scriptures. The written Word of God was fully capable of showing the way of “salvation” in its wider scope as either temporal or eternal deliverance. At the same time the divines did not intend to deny that God could still speak through special providences that might involve dreams or the ministry of angels, for example, but such revelation was always to be considered “mediate.” The primary means was held to be the written Scriptures, illuminated by the Holy Spirit. The unity of the Word and Spirit was maintained, and God's freedom to address individual circumstances remained intact.

The author of the cited link summing up with:

Whether you agree with the Scottish Presbyterians and the English Puritans on this matter, I don't think anyone grappling with Milne's research can deny that he presents a compelling case for the conclusion just stated. Without a doubt, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* teaches cessationism, but it is a cessationism which requires considerable nuance and allows for supernatural surprises so long as they are working with and through the Word of God.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/the-puritans-strange-fire-cessationism-and-the-westminster-confession/>

believed and then a little later there were 5000 believers. (the 'mustard seed' was beginning to grow). To begin they were mostly, exclusively among the Jews. Then further, Peter, one of the 'eleven': he went and preached to the 'gentiles'. So it wasn't long before Jews and Samaritans and Gentiles were believing, throughout Palestine. And then across the northern Mediterranean area. Then south into Africa. And some believe, within a few years, even as far as ... India.

Tens of thousands of men and women were turning to Christ. Miracles were taking place in that lives were beginning to change. Wonderfully transformed by the power of the Gospel alone. People's lives turned around by the power of the Gospel alone. And this continues today, through the Gospel – in written form – provided by those Apostles through Christ's Spirit working in them as He promised.

Today as we look over the whole world some 1988 years since Christ said the words we can look into almost every nation, we can find millions of believers.

People whose lives have been changed. They have come to God through coming to Christ; they know God through knowing Christ and far greater things have taken place through the instrumentality of Christian believers than took place in those three years of our Lord's ministry. His Word proved true!

We conclude today with verse 13 and 14:

*<sup>13</sup> Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it.*

Our Lord is doing wonderful things from His ascended position today. Lives are being transformed by Gospel preaching – all through the power of Christ. Exercising His power in the world through Christian believers.

But the Christian Church has no power just to transform people without reference to Christ. The power of the Church, Jesus says here, is in the fact that it maintains constant contact with Christ. Although He has 'ascended into glory', He is not beyond contact. But it is our responsibility to ask Him for things. And we are to ask 'in His Name': in other words, to ask for things that will be for Jesus Christ's glory.

Anything that we ask that is for Jesus Christ's glory. Anything we ask the Father which Jesus Christ Himself could have asked, He will do it. We have this fantastic promise – which the Church has never seriously avail itself of! Found here at John 14:13 *<sup>13</sup> Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, ... . And why will He do it? <sup>13</sup> ... that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

*<sup>14</sup> If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it.* That was going to be a great support for these 'eleven' Christians. Christ was going to be dead and buried, but then they were going to enjoy Him again for 40 days. Then as they watched He was going to ascend back to glory. And He left behind His Word. And later His Spirit came – as found in the next paragraph of this Chapter.

They knew that they didn't need to lose contact with Christ because He was gone. That they could still address Him. They knew that He was powerful, so that anything they asked Him for, that was for His glory and the good of His Kingdom, He would do it!

There's a promise to lay hold on this week!<sup>3</sup>

[1893]

**May this be so for all the saints gathered here today.**

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3 This week God will give you opportunities to speak up for Christ. Then difficulties may come. You'll wish that the Lord Himself was standing next to you. You'll be asked a question and you won't know how to answer it. Or be put in a situation that is so difficult you can't see how you can proceed without bringing discredit on the Gospel, you need wisdom. Then there's this promise: <sup>3</sup> *Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.* You'll find that the absent Lord is not absent at all. You'll ask, "Lord help me to answer this person effectively." in your heart. They looking at your face haven't got a clue that your praying. But suddenly – like a flash – it occurs to you to say something that would never have normally occurred to you. And you say it. It's a conquering word. Its a word the quells or convinces them and they cannot withstand the spirit and wisdom with which you speak. Here was this difficult situation, where you felt that whatever you would do would be wrong. Yet Christ's Word and promise was there.

## **Christ's Gift to the People**

Per S Olyott

(Review of last time) -

Christ's three-fold legacy to His people: proclaimed in John 14:15-31.

Imagine if you will a young man of many years ago who had a dear relative die. This was to him a sad loss because they were close. However in due course he discovered that this relative had left him a legacy. While a small amount by today's standards it was enough for him to have a mini grand tour of two weeks, of the 'sights' of several European Countries. This experience stayed with him the rest of his life. While he remembered the actual sum of the legacy, what stayed with him was the benefit of the legacy gained from those once in a lifetime experiences.

Christ's legacy to His people is of much greater import than this example, but in one way there is a similarity. The fact of a legacy can remain in your memory, but the lasting value is what the legacy brings about.

In Chapter 14 we are shown Christ's legacy to His people. It's Thursday night when our Lord speaks – they are still in the 'upper room' – in a few hours, by the time the morning has come: He will have been arrested; had six mock trials; and crucified that morning. By the evening He will have been taken down from the Cross. He will have been wrapped and put into Joseph of Arimathea's tomb: dead.

In God's mercy on the Sunday morning He will rise from the dead. Then for 40 days He will gather His little band of disciples again and He will speak to them – telling them marvellous things (most of which isn't recorded). Then when the 40 days are over, as they are watching, He will be taken back to where He came from. He'll go back to His Father.

That's where our Lord is today. He is physically absent. Not one person present, however strongly you believe, not one has ever seen the absent Lord. You Love Him but you have never seen Him! But what He has left to believers is a legacy. A three-fold legacy.

He will come again (the second time) when we will see Him, but until such a time as we do see our Dear Lord we have the legacy.

The original 11 who were in the 'upper room', they have all died. As far as we know 10 of them were brutally murdered for being Christians. Only one died 'naturally'. Which was John himself. Who as an old man is writing this Gospel. The only believers alive today are us and people like us throughout the whole world. The believers have changed since those original disciples, but the legacy they received continues.

What was Christ's gift to His people then, is still His gift to his people today: the legacy of the Lord Jesus Christ to His people.

Three points:

- He has left us His Spirit,
- His Word, and
- His peace.

Saying two things about each of them.

### **His Spirit:**

Christ's bodily presence is no longer with us, but He has left us His Spirit. Here we distinguish between a legacy and the results which flow from a legacy.

The actual legacy of the Spirit: While Jesus had been with the disciples He was their helper/comforter and 'rock'. But He says that He must leave them, however He says He will then be able to leave them another helper (**παράκλητον** -paraklēton<sup>4</sup> ).

There's that little band of 11. Their hearts are breaking, because their Lord is going to leave them – the very one who has helped and comforted them so much. Through all their difficult experiences so far. The One who has been their teacher is going to go and they can't go with Him. Their hearts are breaking. But before He goes He says that He is going to give them *another* helper. The word is Paraclete in Greek – someone who brings comfort through help in ways like advocacy. So Jesus is saying to His disciples, “When I go, my legacy to you, will be a Person and that Person will be to you all that I am to you. That is my legacy. A Person.

Who will send this Spirit (verse 16)? The Father.

Why will He come? Because Jesus will ask the Father to send Him.

How long will He stay? Will He, like the human Lord Jesus Christ, one day have to leave? No. That He may be with you for ever! And even when our Lord comes back the Spirit won't be withdrawn. Even in heaven itself where we will look on the Lord Jesus we shall still enjoy the comfort and ministry of the Holy Spirit. He will never ever leave us. Everything that Christ was to His earthy disciples, the Holy Spirit was to them after Jesus was gone.

Who exactly is this Helper and Advocate – Paraclete?

(verse 17) He's THE Spirit. Christ's legacy is a Person, but He is a Spirit. He's incorporeal – has no body. He's invisible. But none the less a Person.

He's the Spirit of truth. Perhaps the disciples thought that once Christ was gone they would wander away. Spiritually lose their way, and would never hear the truth again. “The Spirit of truth is whom I will send. The world can't receive Him because the world is only interested in what it can see.” says Jesus.

“This Helper I will send is not unknown to you!” They may have thought that the Spirit who was coming would be a stranger, but He wasn't!

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<sup>4</sup> In John's writings, he used this particular Greek word twice: John 14:16 where it is translated **comforter** or **helper** and in 1 John 2:1 where it is translated as **advocate**.

Just a few month's earlier Jesus had asked the Disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?" They gave a variety of answers that they had heard others say. But Jesus asked again: "What do you say?" Peter speaking for them said, "You are the Christ the Son of the Living God." It flashed across His mind. That was the work of the Holy Spirit.

Nobody can see the true identity of Jesus Christ without the Holy Spirit working in their minds. They had already seen the truth about Christ and repeated it several times. The Holy Spirit was not a stranger to them. **He had already been at work in their lives.**

They were going to have a new relationship with the Holy Spirit, after Jesus had gone. But it wasn't someone whom they had never met before or have had no dealings with before. He was already **with** them! The difference was he was now going to be **in** them.

So that is the legacy of the Spirit. What then are the **results** of this legacy? We take up the passage at verse 18: <sup>18</sup> *"I will not leave you as orphans (or comfortless); I will come to you."* What a remarkable thing to say!

He is saying that they will not be left in sorrow and despair like a young child who loses his father to become an orphan, because the Spirit will come. And more than this: all that Christ is to them will be in the Spirit. So in effect Christ will come to them. They will enjoy the comfort of Christ even though He will be bodily absent. Because of the Holy Spirit they will enjoy all the comfort and blessings that they knew before.

This is a tremendous promise. Think of it. If our Lord had remained only in the body and never gone back to heaven, it would have been awful. How many people could get into a small room to share in intimate fellowship with the earthly Son of God? That evening there were only 11. Today there is a world of millions of believers. It would be an awful thing if you could only share in the comfort of the Lord Jesus if it had to be only in His earthly presence. Wherever He might be at a particular time and place, everywhere and everyone else would be devoid of His presence.

Instead our Lord has gone back to glory and He makes Himself known to Christians and He gives them the comfort that He would have done if He were physically present, by His Holy Spirit. So wherever a Christian is found He can enjoy the comfort of the presence of Christ.

(Verse 19) It's true says Jesus, that very soon the world will not see me anymore. This was true: He was arrested that Thursday night; they tried Him all night – unjustly; they crucified Him in the morning; they took down His body in the evening; and that was the last time the 'world' saw Jesus Christ.

No unconverted person has seen Him since. So he was right: <sup>19</sup> *Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, ..."*

*"... but you will see me."* He says to that 11. Two thousand years later even though we have not seen His physical form – we don't need to – yet we do 'see' Christ. Today

through His Word and Spirit we 'see' His glories; believers 'enjoy' Him; you 'know' Him. When you hear about the comfort of the Lord's presence you 'know' what this means because His Spirit has allowed you to feel this personally. The 'eye of faith' sees Jesus Christ quite clearly. All this through spiritual perception given to you by this very Holy Spirit – the helper – that Christ promised on that night of the 'last supper'.

And in the same verse He goes on to say: *Because I live, you also will live*. On the following Sunday morning the Holy Spirit by a great act of power raised Christ from the dead. “When you became a Christian”, says Paul in Ephesians Chapter 1, “the same Holy Spirit who raised Christ from the dead did something similar in you.” The spiritual side of your nature was dead – lifeless. It required a miracle! That miracle was performed by the Holy Spirit, who raised you to spiritual life. So that you now move in the spiritual realm. You're conscious in a spiritual dimension. You do know spiritual things. Because Christ lives you live also! It's all the 'fruit' of the Holy Spirit's coming as Christ promised, and delivered.

In verse 20 Jesus says specifically to those and the other Apostles that when the Holy Spirit comes you're going to see certain things clearly: <sup>20</sup> *In that day you will know that I am in my Father, ...* Christian theologians may have difficulty putting what this means into words, but Christian believers have an inner sense of its meaning put there by the Spirit. You know that there is an intimacy between the Father and the Son that you couldn't describe in any other terms.

And the Spirit brings further understanding: <sup>20</sup> *In that day you will know that I am in my Father, ... and you in me, and I in you*. When you Christians hear it said that you are in Christ and He is in you, you don't call it nonsense. You may not be able to define exactly what is meant by these words, but you know it's true. Something in your conscience tells you, “Yes! I am in Christ.” You appreciate that when Christ died you were reckoned to have died (to sin) in Him; when Christ was raised from the dead you were reckoned to have been raised (to eternal life) in Him. When Christ ascended, you were reckoned to have ascended in Him. When God looks on you He sees you clothed in Him.

### **You are treated by the Father as if you were His Son.**

Christians then can believe that while the man, Jesus is absent, being in heaven at the Father's side – He is in glory, nevertheless He is in you – your hope of glory! Unconverted people cannot cope with this (if they think about it at all). How can Jesus be in your heart when the very same Jesus is 'absent' – at God's right hand? But the benefit of spiritual enlightenment, by the Holy Spirit, is that you don't find that a problem. Because you know the Holy Spirit, who makes Jesus real to you. This glorious spiritual Person 'indwells' you in such a way as He can be described as Jesus' other self. So you know you have Jesus Christ resident in you although He is the absent Lord.

The first part of Christ's three-fold legacy: **the Spirit**.

If you're a Christian you don't have to pray for the Spirit to come. He's come! You can't call Jesus Christ, Lord – if it hadn't been for the Holy Spirit working in your life. You don't have to pray for a 'Baptism in the Spirit'. You've already had that

Baptism says the Apostle Paul. (Roman 6:1-14)<sup>5</sup> You have been inaugurated into the spiritual dimension.

The coming of the Spirit is what explains the modern world: It's a Sunday morning in March 2018. All across the county there are millions of people who are guiltily ignorant of God. They are shutting God out of their mind. They know He's there but they are shutting Him out! Their conscience tells them that God is. But they are putting Him out of their life. They don't want to know about His ways; demands; judgements or promises. They certainly don't want to think about His Son.

It's a whole side of life that they want nothing to do with.

Yet in the same locality, sometimes even in the same family, are people who are filled with a respect and an awe and fear of the Living God. They are convinced of their sins. They see their great need of a Saviour. They see that the Saviour has to be Jesus Christ. They love the Lord Jesus Christ. They spend time everyday communing with the Lord Jesus Christ. They want to walk in Christ's ways. They want to enjoy Christ. They want to know more of His 'presence'. Know more of His blessing. His approval is all that they care about. ... Sometimes in the same house as those who don't!

Why is this the case?

The answer is because of Christ's legacy of the Holy Spirit. Some people are spiritually enlightened by the Holy Spirit. If you're such a person you must rejoice. You've entered into Christ's legacy.

[2397]

**May this be so for all the saints gathered here today.**

I offer this prayer: The one at the end of the article mentioned in the second footnote: How grateful we are, Father, for this word of assurance that though we are left to struggle with evil that is resident in our body, it has not touched our spirit, and it cannot do so. There is a part of us, the very essence of us, which does not sin, and which remains in control despite temporary failures that we experience in body and soul. Lord, we thank you for this assurance that the struggle is to an end, that we will be victorious, that those of us who are in Christ will not need to be depressed and discouraged and need not fail, for there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord. Sin shall not have dominion over us, for we are not under law, but under grace. Thank you in Jesus' name, Amen.

Next week we continue in Chapter 14.

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<sup>5</sup> For a thorough exposition see: <https://www.raystedman.org/new-testament/romans/the-true-baptism-of-the-spirit> . Note the comment :(*1 Corinthians 12:13 NIV*). Notice how he emphasizes twice that all believers were baptized into one body. We were placed into Christ. You are not a Christian if that isn't true of you. Therefore, people today who say you need to experience the baptism of the Holy Spirit after you become a believer do not understand the Scriptures. There is no way to become a believer without being baptized with the Holy Spirit. And the Prayer at the end.

## **Christ's Gift to the People – part 2**

Per S Olyott

(Review of last time) -

Now the second part of Christ's great legacy:

The first was His Spirit. Now His Word. He's not just left His 'other Self', He's left His Word.

Just as our Lord said two things about His Spirit: who He is and what the results of His coming are. So our Lord says two things about His Word.

The first thing He says about His word is that it is the Test of love.

Christ (physically) is no longer in the world. But His Word is. Let's reflect on what the Word of Christ is. Some people have 'red letter Bibles', where the words of Christ are printed in red while the rest of the Bible is in black. Yet those parts in red are not the only part of the Bible which are Christ's words.

If you read the 'red' bits it is clear that Christ puts His imprimatur, (His authoritative seal of approval) on all of the Old Testament. He lays claim to the fact that it is His Word. So the whole of the Old Testament should be in red! Then our Lord commissioned the Apostles to write – and they did so, or other people wrote under their superintendence – so you can put all the New Testament in red also. All 66 books of the Bible are to be considered the 'Word of Christ'. Indeed His Spirit inspired prophet and Apostle to write the Scriptures.

We don't have the bodily presence of Christ. But we do have His Word. And this Word is the test of love. If you want to know if somebody loves Christ or not (and this assessment can only be an introspective not an outward one) you find out by your attitude to this Word.

In this age the Word of Christ is in 'all the world'. For the first time in history there is potentially a Word Wide Church. Christians in 'every Nation Continent and Island'. The 'mustard seed' has grown! Even in Albania, where not so long ago every Religion, by law was banned<sup>6</sup>, you'll find Christians.

The fastest growing churches in the world are in South American.

The Word of Christ is everywhere.<sup>7</sup> The Word of Christ is abroad with love.

6 In 1944 the Communists took over Albania: By May 1967, religious institutions had been forced to relinquish all 2,169 churches, mosques, cloisters, and shrines in Albania, many of which were converted into cultural centres for young people. As the literary monthly Nendori reported the event, the youth had thus "created the first atheist nation in the world."

Article 37 of the [Albanian Constitution](#) of 1976 stipulated, "The State recognises no religion, and supports atheistic propaganda in order to implant a scientific materialistic world outlook in the people",

7 Here is an experience from John Smith who spent time as a Missionary in Nigeria: Services there could take many hours – depending on how long their spiritual appetite lasted. They make their Sabbath day one whole day. A Service was going on and a small boy was getting more and more restless. So a wise dad decided that he would leave the service with the boy and go for a walk in the bush. They walked away from the church and as they walked further into the bush, where the sounds from their

Some half (of all the people) of the world has ready access to the Word of Christ. Of these there are two types of people:

- there are those who have the Word of Christ and disobey it, and
- those who have the Word of Christ and obey it.

Jesus said that those that have His Word and disobey it are like the ones who built their house on sand. When the crunch comes it all collapses.

Those who have His Word and obey it: they are like the people who build on the rock. When the storm comes they still stand. (Matthew 7:24-27)

Our Lord refers to both sorts here: Verse 21. <sup>21</sup> *Whoever 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.*” And then verse 24. <sup>24</sup> *Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. ...*

The only people who are recognised as lovers of Christ are those who have His Word and obey it. In addition to verse 21, see also verse 23: <sup>23</sup> *Jesus answered him, “If anyone 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.*

Many people around the world claim to love the Lord Jesus Christ. But the only ones who do, are the ones who keep His sayings.

In Rome is a man who is said to read his Bible every day. His Bible tells him that the way to God is only through Jesus Christ who is the only Mediator. His Bible tells him that works, ceremonies, even Churches and their traditions, can never put a person right with an offended God. Each person to be saved must come to the appointed Saviour. He reads that in his Bible but he's the head of an organisation which teaches that by Baptism and Masses and confessions and priesthoods a person can be saved. It is not we who judge him, but the Bible itself which tells him that he fails the only test of love for Christ.

In Canterbury in recent times, (1980) there was an enthronement<sup>8</sup>. Christ's word forbids praying for the dead, but they prayed for the recently assassinated Bishop of Salvador.<sup>9</sup> Christ's Word forbids the worship of Mary! But they sang her praise and prayed to her. Christ's Word forbids cooperation with unbelievers, but they invited such an unbeliever to 'read the Lesson'. Christ's Word teaches that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father AND the Son. But when they recited the great Nicene Creed – to avoid offending somebody – they missed out 'and the Son'.

But don't just point at our 'brother's speck' of some years ago. Some who claim to be Christians – closer to here and now – say they have been converted at such and

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church became less, they could hear other sounds. As they stopped and listened in the quietness, they found that from every direction they could hear the sound of the singing of hymns. Remarkable! Besides the congregation they had left there were little ones and bigger ones everywhere.

8 The Enthronement of the Archbishop of Canterbury (1980)

9 Óscar Romero: Assassinated: 24 March 1980, San Salvador, El Salvador.

such a place and at such and such a time with an 'experience'. They look back to this and say, "I was saved". "I came out of darkness into light." "I'm a Christian believer." But there is Christ's Word: it teaches how to think, how to live, how to behave, how to 'walk in the Way'. What sins to put to death. What affections to set their heart upon.

They live as though none of this had ever been said!

They look back to some traumatic experience they have had and they say that that makes you a Christian. But the Scripture does not accept on this basis – because there is Christ's Word and it is not being obeyed<sup>10</sup>.

Christ's legacy to the world is not only His Spirit but also His Word. And He says that His Word is the test of who is a lover of Him and who is not.

He goes on however to tell us a second thing about this Word.

Verses 21- 24. His Word is not only the **test of love**, but also the **way to blessing**.  
<sup>21</sup> *Whoever 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.*” Jesus says to His 'little eleven' "Here's my Word, my legacy to you, If you keep my Word my Father will love you and I will love you and I will **manifest** myself to you.” But you may object, "Wait a minute, you Just said that it is the Spirit who will be with you, but now you are saying Christ will be manifest.” This is what is being said and it is not a contradiction because you can't separate Christ from His Word. People who obey Christ's Word find that Christ is real (manifest) to them.

(verse 23) <sup>23</sup> *Jesus answered him, "If anyone 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**.* What a marvellous promise! As you submit to Christ's Word. As you seek to put into practice what Christ Word says, you experience the companionship of the absent Lord. He actually makes His abode in you. A living bright reality. That's Christ's legacy, through His Word. Yes it comes about by the Spirit, but always with the Word.<sup>11</sup> They are inseparable!

Submission to the Word. Yet the 'world' knows nothing of these blessings. (verse 24) because they don't love Christ.

The only people that Christ has ever revealed Himself to, since His resurrection, are people who love Him. Not to anybody else. There is a blessed secret here!

You want to enjoy the presence of Christ in what ever you do and wherever you are, then go to Christ's Word. Find out from Christ's Word, what is expected of you in all of

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<sup>10</sup> So how is it that a person can rely on the memory of an experience and yet not show that they obey Christ's word and hence show that they actually love Him. What it means is that the experience on which they place such hope was not the experience of conversion (the new birth) brought about by the Spirit through the call of the Word. Such a person is not yet a Christian. By God's grace and at His time they may become one.

<sup>11</sup> As the Bible Project on John's Gospel pointed out when initially referring to the first verses of Chapter 1: The Second Person of the Trinity was called the Word – in the beginning. The Word that was with God. The Word was God. The Word which comes from God through the Son, by the Spirit is the expression of the essence of the Godhead. In the human case what is the essence of a man which reveals his inner nature? Others can only perceive this by what he says and does. His spoken and enacted words.

you life experiences – toil and pleasure. Obey and He will manifest Himself to you.

Your enjoyment of Christ will be related to your obedience.<sup>12</sup>

Christ then has left us His Spirit and His Word. Those are the two great parts of Christ's legacy. Strictly speaking just these two. Anything else that you enjoy from Christ is derived from these. A multitude of things which we can enjoy flow from these. (The union of Christ's Spirit and Word)

Some have the gift of being justified in God's sight. Reconciled to Him and adopted into His family. (Not by anything you are or do, but because of who Christ is and has done for you.) Perhaps you attended to the preaching of the Bible. You found you were a sinner. The Holy Spirit moved in your mind and made you desire a Saviour. The Bible promised to you that Jesus Christ is that Saviour. The Holy Spirit brought you to Christ as He had been presented to you in the Gospel. It was by the Spirit and the Word that you came into the experience of justification.

Christians can enjoy a great sense of the sonship with God. The Spirit moves in you heart. He is the Spirit of son-ship. (Romans 8:15) The Bible is telling you that you are the children of God. As the Spirit moves in your conscience and mind you suddenly appreciate what a great truth this is! You rejoice in your sonship. The cause: the Spirit and the Word.

Christians may experience a developing holiness. You see in the Bible what your duty is and the Holy Spirit gives you the strength to obey your duty.

So many blessings He has left for us through His Spirit and His Word. And the greatest is the one that is mentioned in this Chapter. His peace. (He fastens so strongly on this in this chapter that we can expand our title to describe His three-fold Legacy. Spirit, Word and Peace.

What He promised to those disciples then, was lasting peace, but also immediate peace. (Verses 25-27)

“O Lord,” they might have been saying to themselves, “We'd like to keep your Word, but how will we remember it?”

Jesus says, “I'll send my Spirit to you and He will bring it all back to you.”

Note they wouldn't have been able to remember the Words of Jesus without the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit came in the special way to them what they did remember, was God's Word. Spirit and Word again together!

Don't panic because Christ is going away. Don't think you'll forget His words. The Spirit will bring the words to mind. A great sense of peace must have flooded their

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<sup>12</sup> Notice the order of events in the answer to the first question of the Catechism: The chief and highest purpose of man is to glorify God (then) fully enjoy Him for ever.

hearts as they heard that.

And then He went on to promise them peace. Verse 27 is worth a \$million and more. <sup>27</sup> *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.* (His peace – the very peace Christ has) *Not as the world gives do I give to you.* The world often gives temporally, reluctantly or gives you things that other people take away. Not Jesus. That marvellous gift of peace.

Today as a Christian you have peace **with** God! And the peace **of** God – Jesus Christ. When bereavement comes, your heart 'breaks' like everybody else's, but as you reflect on God's Word the Spirit strengthens you, to know that God cares for you and underneath are the everlasting arms supporting you. And all things are working together for your good. Thus even in the 'storm' you still have peace. *Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*

You, as a Christian have terrible sorrows to confront. Opposition to your faith and many difficulties. Ultimately to face death and the judgement. (unlike the unconverted who by and large are blissfully ignorant of the judgement.) But on those occasions God brings His Word to your mind, by His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit uses the Word to strengthen you. And so despite all the troubles you still have the peace of God. That's one of the greatest blessings of conversion. A present aid – not only 'pie in the sky bye and bye'. As we submit to His Word His Spirit blesses us in the here and now. One of the greatest blessings being peace.

Back in the 'upper room' that was an immediate peace as well as a lasting peace, because that's what they needed. They were going to go through terrible things over the next few days. Christ gave them special words from verse 28 onward.

<sup>28</sup> *You heard me say to you, 'I am going away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.* <sup>29</sup> *And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe.* <sup>30</sup> *I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, (because Christ had no sin of His own – it was only unredeemed sin that gave Satan His power over people.)* <sup>31</sup> *but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father.*

As they are about to leave that room Christ gives yet another example. One which if it is good enough for Him should be well and truly good enough to you and me. How does Christ show His love for the Father? By obeying what the Father has commanded. Christian go and do likewise!

[2318]

**May this be the case for all the saints gathered here today.**

John 15:1-27

**Our Relationship with Christ, Each Other & the World**

Per S Olyott

(Review of last time) -

The Words of Chapter 15 were spoken on the Thursday night before our Lord's death. He's spending just a few hours alone with the 'eleven', before His crucifixion the next day. He's just shared the "last supper" with them. He's spoken to them the words of Chapter 14. He's explained that the fact that He is going away shouldn't fill them with sadness and grief. He's going to leave three things behind: He's going to leave His **Spirit** with them (His other self); He's going to leave His Word with them (they needn't worry about forgetting that Word, because the Spirit will bring that Word back to their memory); and as the combined consequence of these two gifts or legacies, He leaves His **peace** with them.

But now we come to a different subject:

The Lord crosses the room, goes through the door, down the steps and out into the streets of Jerusalem. The 'eleven' go with Him. He takes the narrow streets of Jerusalem which lead to the garden of Gethsemane. As they get to the edge of the city, there are houses with gardens. It's moonlight – Passover time – they can see vines. Perhaps over the walls. They can look to the Mount of Olives, which is in front of them (the Garden of Gethsemane is at the bottom that mount) and see fires on the mountain side.

It's Passover time. Thousands of people have come to Jerusalem, they have nowhere to stay, so many of them are camping out. It's cold at night so groups of them have lit fires. Their fuel is the dead branches of the vines that are plentiful. The spring pruning has been underway.

Jesus pauses just near a vine while still in the city and looks across to the fires of the burning of the vine cuttings. And so He speaks.

His subject is the one of relationships.

He's going to explain now to his disciples, before He leaves them, what relationship they are to have with him, after He's gone. He already told them that a relationship will be possible because of the special coming of the Holy Spirit.

Then what relationship they should have with each other. Up to now there has been the Lord, and specifically the 'eleven'. At this point they don't realise it, but soon there will be many thousands of Christians. He is giving them teaching on how Christians should relate to each other.

He then closes by telling them what will be their relationship to the rest of the world. The unconverted world. The vast majority of men and women who never come to a personal relationship with Christ.

So: relationships.

His starting point is the very present, vine. As well as to look across at the fires, where discarded vine branches are being burnt. With the 'picture' of the vines He introduces the relationship that Christians believers are to have with their Lord. We are privileged this morning because we can 'listen in' to our Lord's conversation. We can listen in to this second discourse. He intended that that this should be so, thus the Holy Spirit, through the Apostles, has recorded the words that He spoke. Here we are, so many years after these words were said and can hear 'word for word' what our Lord said, on that final night.

The first 8 verses: speaking about what sort of relationship we should have with our Lord.

He is a vine. The true vine. And His Father is the vine dresser. Productive vines are never found 'growing wild'. When we spent a month at the Church in Mildura, there were many 'blocks' of tended vines in full production and others that had just been meticulously planted. Backpackers were finding plenty of employment. But also there were a few 'blocks' that had straggles of untended vines. The tidy and well kept lines of vines had disappeared. The vines were there but they were wild and fruitless. Sad!

Vines do not do well unless they are tended and looked after, even in the most promising situations. Mildura is supplied with plentiful sun light and a area-wide system of irrigation channels throughout the blocks.

Jesus describes Himself as a vine. But who has planted Him? Vines don't just happen. They don't prosper if they grow 'wild'. He is a vine who has been planted and tended by His Father. This is Christ's starting point. He reminds the disciples that He is 'the vine' but that He has come into the world on the initiative of the 'first Person' of the Trinity, the Father. He is still the object of His Father's love – as He will explain later in the chapter.

He goes on to explain in verse 5, that He is the vine, but His disciples are the branches. Our Lord is the stem and believers are the branches. What He means is that if they have spiritual life – which they do, they can see spiritual things and believe invisible things. It's because the sap in him is flowing in them. Any spiritual life that they have: the source of that life is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Also the fact of their having spiritual life comes about due to their 'union' – their intimate union, the closeness of their relationship, with Him.

The spiritual life you have today is the very life of Christ! Which you only have because you are in intimate union with Him.

By the 'picture' of the vine our Lord shows, what is expected, above everything else of a Christian. Those deserted blocks of vines at Mildura were most disappointing, especially when compared with the well-tended ones. Not a single useful bunch of fruit anywhere. What you expect to find of a vine is fruitfulness. That's their purpose in God's plan. That's why they are tended. This our Lord describes again and again. The purpose of the vine is to be fruitful.

What our Lord is teaching here, is that the thing that is expected most of the Christian is spiritual fruitfulness. The very life of Christ flows into the Christian. The fruit that the Christian bears is 'Christ-likeness'. As the sap of grace flows through a Christian's

soul, what it produces is the fruit of grace: Christ-likeness.

That is what is expected above everything else in a Christian. A character which is increasingly like that of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Consider verse 2: Some branches may look as if they are really connected to the vine, but you can tell if one isn't. No foliage. It's dry and brittle. But the real test is that there is no fruit. No fruit! What does the tender of the vineyard do when he finds a branch which has no fruit on it<sup>13</sup>? The verse tells us: <sup>2</sup>*Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away.* He comes with his knife and cuts the branch off. Perhaps to be fuel for those Passover-time fires on the Mount of Olives.

But the knife also goes to the branches that bear fruit. Also mentioned here in verse 2. Perhaps excessive foliage, which is taking up too much of the sap. So that the fruit bearing can be increased. At the same time the knife is used to scrape off mould and blight. Anything else that can destroy the fruitfulness of the vine. The vine feels the touch of the knife.

The unbeliever feels the touch of the knife. He may even look like a Christian, but the fact that He does not have a Christ-like character at all proves that he is not joined to the vine at all. He's disowned.

The believer, on the other hand, who shows Christ-likeness in his life, he also feels the touch of the knife. Into his life comes many difficult and hard experiences. But it is by means of those hard experiences. Those painful cuttings, that more and more Christ-likeness is brought about in his life.

When Christ said that, no doubt the disciples were very concerned as to whether they were really Christians, rather than just looking like Christians.

So immediately Jesus reassures them that they are Christians: <sup>3</sup>*Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you.*

Judas has already been cut out! (Again Jesus affirms that the remaining 'eleven' have been made once and for all 'clean'.) His Word has already done its work in their lives.

The blight that would cause them to wither. The pestilence and insects, the excess foliage, which would ruin their fruitfulness: the Lord's Word has already been cleaning the vine and pruning it to make way for more fruitfulness.

So we pause to notice that there are two ways to be made Christ-like as a Christian:

- one is the pruning knife of God's providence<sup>14</sup>, and
- one is Christ's Word.

Together that's how 'holiness' is improved and increased in the Christian believer: exposure to Christ's Word does the work, but also the difficult and hard experiences which Christians are called through – so diverse that we could never catalogue them – they are also instruments in God's hands to bring about more and more fruitfulness

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<sup>13</sup> There are two times when pruning is carried out. Straight after harvest, when heavy pruning is carried out to control the development of the vine on its trellis. The future quality of new growth would not be evident at this point. The second pruning is once the new growth has developed to the point where assessments can be made. Lack of suitable growth that indicates no developing of fruit leads to removal of this liability from the vine. But the potentially productive growth is also pruned to maximise the productivity of the fruit bearing growth.

<sup>14</sup> See chapter 4 of *God Are You There?* by Steve Brown for a broader treatment of this concept.

in the genuine branches.

Jesus tells them now that if they are true Christians, their greatest duty is to 'abide' (verses 4 & 5) *<sup>4</sup> Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*

You must make a point of cleaving (“sticking like glue”) to Christ. You can only be, and continue to be, fruitful if you continue to cleave to Christ. Christ-likeness is directly related to cleaving to Christ. This intimate relationship which you have must be 'cultivated', improved and continued. For without Him you can do: how much? NOTHING!

There can be no holiness of any description – no real Christ-likeness – in a person who is not intimately united to Christ. And the closer is your relationship to Christ the more fruitful you are. When it's an intimate union it has MUCH fruit. But if there is no union there is no fruit.

The essence of the Christian life is union with Christ.

Many people miss this. Even these days on special days like Easter and Christmas, major (prestigious) churches are filled. Tens of thousands of people believe that if they come to church, even only occasionally, that there is a direct connection and true spiritual discernment: by just sitting there. There is no such necessary connection! This borders on superstition or worse, idolatry. People may feel that doing certain regimentations: all eat fish on Friday, say. They feel that if they do this or that, then some how or other this is what God requires.

Our Lord Jesus strips away all those illusions. True Christianity is not a matter of little rules: does, and don'ts and taboos. True Christianity is in essence: union with Christ. An intimate relationship with Jesus Christ.

The only alternative to cleaving to Christ is given to us in verse 6: *<sup>6</sup> If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.*

Jesus says that the only alternative to union with Himself is: withering; separation; damnation. You might well imagine that our Lord would then have been looking out across to the Mount of Olives, where there were people lifting up dead and withered vine branches and throwing them into the fire.

This 'picture' is used by our Lord: the two alternatives are cleaving to Christ or suffering damnation!

Cleaving is a matter of life and death! But it is also filled with privileges: Verse 7. *<sup>7</sup> If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.* Matthew Henry in his commentary says, of this verse “Those that abide in Christ as their heart's delight shall have, through Christ, their heart's desire.” Cleaving is a matter of life and death, but we don't just cleave to Christ because the

alternative is death! But promised to us by grace is our heart's desire, if Christ is our heart's delight.

So then through the simple illustration of the vine our Lord, powerfully, tells the 'eleven', what their first duty is. Now through long Centuries this discourse has been preserved and by it the Lord Jesus Christ instructs His Church, what is, the first duty of every one of you, who is a Christian:

The first duty of the Christian is to live close to the Lord. And this is able to be done. The Lord is not absent in the way that matters – although He is physically absent He has already told us about His Holy Spirit. <sup>7</sup> *If you abide in me, and my **words** abide in you, **ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.*** Consider the two words 'words' and 'ask'. The way to live close to the Lord is by His Word; the way to live close to the Lord is by prayer. It's in this way, through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, that we maintain the union which we have with Christ. When we have this intimate union cultivated and continued, then spiritual fruitfulness increases.

Christ-likedness is a much needed thing in the world.

The world has all sorts of arguments against the Christian faith. If you're familiar with the arguments they use for 'writing off' the Christian faith: they're not very convincing. But they convince the people of the world. Who consider that they can conveniently forget about Christianity. ... Until a new person at work turns up: who lives a life – honest, strong, Christ-like. Now their arguments seem anaemic. They've tried to explain away the Gospel, but they cannot explain away this transformed life.

They wish to live in total ignorance of God. Then, as a neighbour, comes a Christian couple who have those qualities of Christ-likeness: all the arguments and all the ammunition, they have expended in trying to get the Christian faith out of their own lives, they feel under threat again because here before them is a holy life. Here is a holy relationship that they cannot explain away.

There's great power in a holy life. It's the greatest thing in the world. It's what we need most.

We've got lots of books on apologetics – that seek to show our faith is a reasonable faith: But when it's all said and done there is no greater apologetic than that holy life. Look what Jesus says about it in verse 8: <sup>8</sup> *By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*

A holy life is what is giving glory to God in the world. A holy life is the final proof that you are a disciple.

[2540]

**May this be the case for all the saints gathered here today.**