

Lesson Twenty-Two

(John 16:25-17:26)

John 17:26 marks the end of Jesus' remarks which began back in chapter 13. In this concluding section, Jesus encourages the apostles to be brave. And he asks God's blessings upon himself, upon the apostles, and upon "those who believe in me through their message" (17:21).

Victory Over the World

(John 16:25-33)

²⁵"I have used figures of speech to tell you these things. But the time will come when I will not use figures of speech, but will speak to you plainly about the Father. ²⁶When that day comes, you will ask him in my name; and I do not say that I will ask him on your behalf, ²⁷for the Father himself loves you. He loves you because you love me and have believed that I came from God. ²⁸I did come from the Father, and I came into the world; and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father."

²⁹Then his disciples said to him, "Now you are speaking plainly, without using figures of speech. ³⁰We know now that you know everything; you do not need to have someone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God."

³¹Jesus answered them, "Do you believe now? ³²The time is coming, and is already here, when all of you will be scattered, each one to his own home, and I will be left all alone. But I am not really alone, because the Father is with me. ³³I have told you this so that you will have peace by being united to me. The world will make you suffer. But be brave! I have defeated the world!"

Throughout much of his public ministry Jesus had spoken in parables (*paroimia*) which had the effect of temporarily concealing the truths which he taught. He did so because many of the Jews had already hardened their hearts toward him (Matt. 13:10-17) and because his own disciples were not yet spiritually mature enough to comprehend everything (Matt. 11:25-30).

In 16:26-27 Jesus encourages the apostles to pray boldly and directly to God, through Jesus' name or by his authority, because the Father loves them just as he loves his Son. The Father will listen to them because they love Jesus, and because they believe in him enough to obey his commands (14:15).

Then, in an amazingly concise way, Jesus speaks of his pre-existence, his incarnation, his death, and his ascension (16:28). These are the basic elements of that good news which is "God's power to save all who believe . . ." (Rom. 1:16; see also, Phil. 2:5-11).

The hearts of the apostles are filled with the knowledge that Jesus really does know everything, even to the extent of knowing their questions before they ask them (16:29-30)! So they are quick to confess their belief in his divinity. But this admirable zeal and profession, Jesus warns them, is in for a few bruises in just a little while (16:31-32). Over-confidence can be just as destructive as lack of confidence, and each of the apostles will learn that lesson well during the next few hours.

Concerning 16:33, Paul Butler says: "There are two sides to the peace which the believer has in Jesus. First there is the judicial peace which Jesus accomplishes on behalf of man between God and man. This judicial peace is accomplished at the cross where in His body He suffered the sentence and penalty of sin and took out of the way all the commandments that were against man (cf. Eph. 2:11-22; Col. 2:8-15) which we appropriate by being buried with Him by baptism. Having been united with His death by faith

and obedience (Rom. 6:1-11; Gal. 3:26-27) and having appropriated that judicial peace to our souls, we find and realize that subjective peace of heart and soul which passes understanding (cf. Phil. 4:7)" (*The Gospel of John*, II, 314).

When Jesus says, "I have defeated the world!", he is not only thinking of his past victories but also of the supreme victory which will soon be his. Jesus had already defeated Satan by rejecting every temptation which confronted him. Time and time again he was able to save people from being possessed by demons. And here he also shows his confidence that he will win the ultimate victory, that he will do the Father's will in giving his life to make salvation available to everyone and that the Father will raise him from the dead.

Jesus Prays for Himself

(John 17:1-8)

¹After Jesus finished saying this, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come. Give glory to your Son, so that the Son may give glory to you. ²For you gave him authority over all mankind, so that he might give eternal life to all those you gave him. ³And eternal life means to know you, the only true God, and to know Jesus Christ, whom you sent. ⁴I have shown your glory on earth; I have finished the work you gave me to do. ⁵Father! Give me glory in your presence now, the same glory I had with you before the world was made.

⁶"I have made you known to those you gave me out of the world. They belonged to you, and you gave them to me. They have obeyed your word, ⁷and now they know that everything you gave me comes from you. ⁸I gave them the message that you gave me, and they received it; they know that it is true that I came from you, and they believe that you sent me."

Chapter seventeen contains the longest prayer ever recorded in the New Testament. Jesus' words are on the conversational level that can only exist when two people are in deep harmony with one another.

"The hour has come" (17:1), Jesus says, for the Lamb of God to be sacrificed for the sins of the people. The time has come for the fulfillment of scores of Old Testament prophecies (Isaiah 53, for example). Since that first prophecy in Genesis 3:15, all history has been moving toward this climactic moment.

17:2 is a favorite "proof-text" for those who hold to the Calvinistic brand of predestination. But as Paul Butler says, "It ought to be plain to every reader here from verse three that God

gives to the Son for eternal life all men who are willing to *know* (intellectually and experientially) God the Father as He is revealed in God the Son. It seems to us that the N.T. teaching on election is clear enough in one respect. All men have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. God has not recompensed man with divine justice but has, from divine love, chosen to have mercy and save all who will be saved by grace. God has arbitrarily *elect*ed to save 'whosoever will' in Christ whose body is the church. We are saved by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8). We have access into the grace of God through faith (Rom. 5:2). We are all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus and as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Gal. 3:26-27). The *election* is provided in Christ. God has provided His divinely inspired revelation, the Bible, to invite and instruct men into His election. But men, created with self-sovereign wills, must respond and surrender their will to His will in order to appropriate this election. Faith which issues in obedience to revealed truth is the response God demands of man" (*The Gospel of John*, II, 325).

The word "know" (Greek, *ginosko*) means to be familiar with, to appreciate fully, to understand completely. According to Jesus, when a person has obtained eternal life he knows God (17:3). Such a person understands God's love for him, God's mission for his life, God's plan for the world. And it also means that he has an intimate relationship with God, like a Father and his children (1 John 3:1). All of this was involved in Jesus' work to help the apostles know God in a deeply personal way (17:3-8).

The apostles, then, were specially chosen or destined for discipleship. However, each one had to make the choice whether to obey God's call and whether to continue in it. A successful doctor might, for example, dream of the day when his own son would follow in his footsteps. He may even make elaborate, long-range plans to set his son up in medical practice with him. But the son may still refuse to accept his father's generosity, thus thwarting the father's plans and dreams. The same principle holds true regarding our heavenly Father. He has the highest and greatest of plans for *every person* who will follow him, but we may frustrate those plans and miss out on those blessings because of our personal, voluntary decision.

Jesus Prays for the Apostles

(John 17:9-19)

⁹"I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those you

gave me, for they belong to you. ¹⁰All I have is yours, and all you have is mine; and my glory is shown through them. ¹¹And now I am coming to you; I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, Holy Father! Keep them safe by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one just as you and I are one. ¹²While I was with them, I kept them safe by the power of your name, the name you gave me. I protected them, and not one of them was lost, except the man who was bound to be lost — so that the scripture might come true. ¹³And now I am coming to you, and I say these things in the world so that they might have my joy in their hearts in all its fullness. ¹⁴I gave them your message, and the world hated them, because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but I do ask you to keep them safe from the Evil One. ¹⁶Just as I do not belong to the world, they do not belong to the world. ¹⁷Dedicate them to yourself by means of the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸I sent them into the world just as you sent me into the world. ¹⁹And for their sake I dedicate myself to you, in order that they, too, may be truly dedicated to you."

Having sought strength for himself (17:1-8), Jesus now turns the attention of the Father toward the apostles (17:9). The apostles may have been a little surprised by Jesus' statement that "my glory is shown through them" (17:10). After all, they were prone to fussing among themselves and could not understand a lot of what Jesus told them. But just as the successful athlete brings honor to his coach, the apostles will eventually prove themselves to be great servants of God. And their dedicated, disciplined lives will lead many to honor Jesus as Lord.

In 17:11-12 Jesus asks that God continue to protect the apostles and keep them working together as one united force. Nothing pleases Satan more than for God's children to waste their energy feuding and fighting among themselves. Jesus' prayer was answered as on the Day of Pentecost these men stood united as they preached the complete gospel message for the first time (Acts 2).

Jesus realizes, of course, that the apostles must be in contact with worldly people in order to influence them (17:15). If the apostles had retreated from the world, to live as hermits in a cave or as monks in a monastery, Christianity would have suffocated and died. We certainly must protect ourselves against dangerous alliances with worldly people, but we must proclaim the message of Jesus in every arena of life (1 Cor. 5:9-13; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 3:1-17).

Where the TEV uses "dedicate" the King James version uses "sanctify" in 17:17-19. "Sanctification" (Greek, *hagiasmos*) means not only to be separated from the sinfulness in the world, but also to be ordained and equipped for the work which God wants done. It is not some mysterious experience available to only a few Christians. Anyone who loves Jesus may be sanctified or dedicated by obeying the word of God as revealed in the New Testament (17:17; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; 2 Thess. 2:13-15; Rom. 1:16; 10:17).

Jesus Prays for All Christians

(John 17:20-26)

²⁰"I pray not only for them, but also for those who believe in me because of their message. ²¹I pray that they may all be one. Father! May they be in us, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me. ²²I gave them the same glory you gave me, so that they may be one, just as you and I are one: ²³I in them and you in me, so that they may be completely one, in order that the world may know that you sent me and that you love me.

²⁴"Father! You have given them to me, and I want them to be with me where I am, so that they may see my glory, the glory you gave me; for you loved me before the world was made. ²⁵Righteous Father! The world does not know you, but I know you, and these know that you sent me. ²⁶I made you known to them, and I will continue to do so, in order that the love you have for me may be in them, and so that I also may be in them."

As a Christian, isn't it a heart-warming thought that one night nearly two-thousand years ago the Son of God prayed for *you*? We who have believed in Jesus because of the testimony of the apostles (17:20) owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to them.

And isn't it sadly ironic that we often seem to do everything in our power (or perhaps more accurately, Satan's power) to destroy the oneness for which Jesus prayed (17:21). We have divided and sub-divided over just about any and everything we can think of: personality conflicts, personal opinions about minor doctrinal issues, and conflicts over what methods we should use to carry out God's commands. The world is literally going to hell while we argue about how to put out the fire!

The unity for which Jesus prayed was not merely a union of organizations. It was a prayer for the melting of individual hearts into one burning fire of fellowship, teaching, and service. And it was not a call for unity simply for unity's sake. Unity among

God's people (those who are in the world-wide family of God) is a *means* to an end: "that the world may know that you sent me and that you love them as you love me" (17:23). The price that we are paying for division among born-again believers is an increasingly pagan world.

Of course, there is just no way for a man to be one with other Christians if there is chaos and sin in his own life. The way to get right with others is to first get right with God. Vance Havner hit the nail on the head when he wrote: "We are busy these days with union and unification, trying to get the saints together, but what is needed is unity, and that we find only in heart-fellowship with Jesus Christ. Tuning one piano to another is a tedious procedure, but tune each to the pitch of the tuning fork, and when they are in tune with that they will be in tune with each other. Attuned to Christ we have harmony with each other" (*Hearts Afire*, p. 42).

Thought Stimulators on John 16:24-17:26

1. Why did God love the apostles?
2. Where did Jesus come from and where was he going?
3. How were the apostles to have peace?
4. Explain Jesus' statement: "I have defeated the world!"
5. Over whom does Jesus have authority?
6. What happens when a person obtains eternal life?
7. What is the first thing Jesus asks God to do for the apostles?
8. Who was "the man who was bound to be lost"?
9. Why did the world hate the apostles?
10. Jesus asks the Father to keep the apostles safe from whom?
11. By what means were the apostles to be dedicated or sanctified?
12. What is the word of God?
13. How may a person today who loves Jesus be sanctified or dedicated?
14. Why does Jesus want his followers to be one?
15. Make a list of *specific* steps that you, as an individual, may take to help remove the many unnecessary divisions among Christians.