

Father in which the prince of this world would be allowed to do his worst to His beloved Son was fast approaching. The adversary was coming to bring his accusations and there would be very little time left for Jesus to speak much with this little band of eleven. No doubt His heart was heavy, knowing their misunderstanding and dullness of heart. He could speak much more but the hour was almost here.

He must prepare to face His darkest hour. His foes would accuse Him and the prince of this world would rail at Him and slander Him through the mouths of men, but no sin or guilt would be found in Him (Jn. 18:23; Lk. 23:22; Mk. 14:56-59, etc.). The prince of this world could find no sin or guilt in Jesus and Jesus knew it. There is no doubt from this passage and others that Jesus was aware of His own sinlessness. No critic of the Bible has the right to say that Jesus did not know whether He was sinless or divine—or, that He never said He was without sin—because it is plain that Jesus both knew it and said it.

He had the power at His command to resist the evil crowd coming for Him—He had the power to refuse the cross, but in order that the world might know of His love for the Father and for mankind He would keep the Father's commandment to lay down His life upon the cross. He will prove His love by keeping His Father's commandments and so will all those who profess to know God prove their love by keeping His commandments (cf. Jn. 15:10).

Quiz

1. To what extent did the Holy Spirit reveal "all" things to the apostles?
2. What is the peace which Christ gives to all believers? What does it do?
3. How is the Father greater than the Son?
4. Why does the prince of this world have nothing "in" Jesus?
5. How does a person prove his love to God?

EXPOSITORY SERMON FOURTEEN

A HAPPY GOODBYE!

John 14:1-31

Introduction

I. BACKGROUND

A. Jesus had just spoken of "going away" where the disciples could not then follow (Jn. 13:36-38).

1. They were perplexed.
2. They were ready to die for him in a physical battle (cf. also Jn. 11:16).

3. They did not know what was about to come to them at His dark hour of Calvary.
- B. Jesus knew that they needed to be strengthened and warned.
 1. There is a deep pathos underlying the words of Jesus—the reader of these three chapters (14-15-16), may almost feel the urgency and tenderness of Jesus.
 2. Jesus desires to prepare them for the shock of what is soon to follow.
 - a. Due to their dullness He cannot speak too bluntly and plainly.
- C. Jesus also knew that His going would bring eventual joy to the disciples.

II. PREACHING OF THIS NATURE NEEDED TODAY

- A. Christian people need to be encouraged and strengthened.
- B. Paul wrote to the people of Thessalonica—"comfort (strengthen) one another with these words" (I Thess. 4:18).
- C. Some preaching on the present ministry of Christ as High Priest and "Preparer" needs to be done today.
- D. Christian people need to be taught the Biblical doctrine of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Not just "about" Him, but instructions as to how He may be allowed to dwell in them and how they may be filled with Him more fully.

Discussion

I. HE GOES TO PREPARE A PLACE OF PERMANENT REST FOR HIS LOVED ONES

- A. This prepared place is not necessarily a "mansion" as we think of "mansions" today.
 1. The Greek word *monai* (used also in Jn. 14:23) is better translated, "dwelling place," "abiding place," "resting place."
 2. The kingdom of God (whether on earth or in Heaven) is a "dwelling place of rest."
 - a. The kingdom of Christ (the church) is figuratively spoken of as a place of rest, peace, security (Isa. 9 & 11, etc.)
 - b. The new dispensation is spoken of in the epistle to the Hebrews as the fulfillment of the rest which God had planned and typified in Joshua and did not fulfill in David (Heb. 3 & 4).
 - c. Jesus spoke of giving rest (Matt. 11:28-30).
 - d. Heaven, of course, is the ultimate abode of rest (Rev. 14:13).

3. Jesus, in His "going" (death, resurrection and ascension) prepared a "resting place" both temporal (the church) and eternal (Heaven).
- B. Jesus, Himself, is the Way.
1. He does not merely show the Way, *He is* the Way.
 2. By His personal, meritorious work we are saved.
 3. This Way was prophesied (Isa. 35:8) and finds its fulfillment in Heb. 10:19-25.
 4. He is the Truth and the Life (see our comments on this verse).
- II. HE GOES TO MAKE THE DISCIPLES CO-LABORERS WITH GOD
- A. He has the authority to do so.
1. He and the Father are One.
 2. He has revealed unto the disciples the Father.
- B. He promises these eleven disciples that they will do the great works which He has done while on earth.
1. Speaking the words of God through the Holy Spirit.
 2. Performing miracles.
 3. Even raising the dead.
- C. But they, and those who should later believe in Him, would do greater works even than Jesus.
1. They would preach the gospel to the whole world.
 2. They would exercise, in the gospel, a power far greater than power over nature.
 - a. To convert men, possessed of the freedom of choice, is to do a greater work than walking on the water.
 3. Preaching the gospel is the "greatest work in the world."
- D. Jesus sets up the "power lines" through which the believer may receive power to do this "greatest work."
1. If we ask anything IN HIS NAME, we shall have it.
 2. We believe this to be a promise to all Christians conditional upon the requests being IN HIS NAME.
 - a. (See our comments on this verse.)
 - b. (cf. I Jn. 5:14-15.)
- III. HE GOES TO "COME AGAIN" IN THE SPIRIT
- A. Keeping His commandments is reiterated as a condition necessary for the sending of the Spirit.
- B. He will be a Strengtheners and Helper and will not leave them "orphans."
- C. He will be the Spirit of Truth.
1. The world cannot receive Him because it refuses to have

God in its knowledge.

2. Worldlings will not believe *because* God's Word tells them the truth (Jn. 8:44-45).
- D. He will dwell in all believers (14:21, 23).
1. All believers will not receive the miraculous gifts of the Spirit.
 2. But His personality will dwell in men and women through His will as expressed in His word (see our special comments on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, pages).
 3. THERE HAS BEEN A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT OF MISUNDERSTANDING AND ERRONEOUS TEACHING ON THIS SUBJECT.
 - a. As a result many millions of Christians are not availing themselves of the POWER of the Holy Spirit for their daily lives by "partaking" of the Spirit (Jn. 6:63).
 - b. Too many people are waiting for the Holy Spirit to do some irresistible work upon them apart from the revealed will of the Spirit in the written word. They want to be compelled to be good without any effort or surrender on their part!
 - c. The only dependable agency available to man by which he may be certain that he *knows* the Holy Spirit or *feels* Him or that He *controls* him is obedience to the written will of the Holy Spirit in His word, which is the Bible!

IV. HE GOES TO BRING PEACE

- A. The Holy Spirit will come and lead them into all truth.
 1. This will bring the final, complete revelation of God concerning man's redemption: this will bring the kingdom of Peace (Isa. 9).
- B. This will be a Peace quite unlike any peace the world knows or seeks.
 1. The foolish world rejects the Prince of Peace when it seeks even its temporal peace.
 2. There can never be lasting peace on earth among nations and men as long as there are men at enmity with God, unregenerate and unsaved.
- C. Christ's peace is twofold, one aspect of it absolutely necessary to cause the other.
 1. First, mankind had to be reconciled to God. Man the sinner becomes an enemy of God when he transgresses God's law.
 - a. Jesus Christ became the Lamb of God to suffer man's penalty.

- b. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself (II Cor. 5:17-21).
 - c. He was our peace, breaking down the barrier of sin and law (Eph. 2:14-15) (cf. also Col. 1:20).
 - d. Man, however, must exercise faith and obedience in order to avail himself of this peace (Rom. 5:1-2).
2. When man has thus availed himself of this peace through the access of faith it brings that peace of mind and soul which is subjective and inner.
 - a. It is a perfect (complete) peace (Isa. 26:3).
 - b. It brings cheer (Jn. 16:33).
 - c. It passes understanding (Phil. 4:7).
 - d. It rules our hearts (Col. 3:15).
 - e. It is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).
 3. Both aspects of it to be preached (Acts 10:36).

Conclusion

I. ALTHOUGH HE MUST SAY GOODBYE FOR AWHILE, IT IS A DEPARTURE THAT BRINGS HAPPINESS, FRUITFULNESS, PEACE

A. He does not leave His disciples as orphans.

1. They are not fatherless, for their Father came and manifested Himself to them—demonstrated His love and care for them.
2. They are not homeless because their Master is preparing a dwelling place for them of permanent rest.
3. They are not lost for they are walking in Him, the Light, the Way, the Truth and the Life.
4. They are not deserted for they have a divine Helper.

B. All who do not believe and obey Christ are the most pathetic orphans the world has ever known.

1. They have no Heavenly Father—their father is the devil.
2. They have no home but must face eternal unrest and torment in the hellish abyss.
3. They are even now lost and are wandering as blind men in the darkness.
4. They have no Helper.

II. HIS GOODBYE WILL RESULT IN THEIR CARRYING ON THE WORK WHICH HE BEGAN

- A. They, and all believers, will become co-laborers with God in the redemption of the world.
- B. They, and all believers, will be crowned with the victor's reward for faithful service.

III. HIS GOODBYE MEANS THE SPIRIT WILL COME AND TAKE RESIDENCE IN ALL WHO BELIEVE AND DESIRE HIM

- A. He will bring joy and fruitfulness into men's lives.
- B. He will make the hidden wisdom of God known to men through the apostles.

IV. HIS GOODBYE MEANS PEACE FOR ALL MEN WHO WILL ACCEPT IT BY FAITH

- A. A peace more wonderful than anything the world can ever offer.
- B. A peace which passes all understanding.
- C. A peace and calm which overcomes all the storms of this life.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

This chapter contains one of the many rhetorical masterpieces of Jesus found in the gospels. Speakers strive for a lifetime to attain the profundity, simplicity, beauty and practicalness expressed in the allegory of the Vine and the branches (Jn. 15:1-11), and find that simply to quote what Jesus said is better than all their own eloquence. Had Jesus never uttered these beautiful words the world would have been much poorer in literary genius, let alone divine wisdom.

The main theme of this chapter is the Living Union of Christ and His Disciples. There are, of course, a few specific promises and instructions which apply strictly to the eleven apostles. But most of the instructions are ageless in their application and they are for the edification of all Christians.

The relationship between Christ and the Christian is not organizational but organic, vivifical, living. Even the societal relationship between Christian and Christian is dependent first and foremost upon the living union between Christ and the individual Christian. There is no life, no beauty and no fruitfulness except in living union with Christ. Apart from Him, even though an organizational status be maintained, there is only withering, decay and death.

We commend every Christian who is interested in knowing and feeling the reality of a closer walk with God to this fifteenth chapter of John. To every Christian who desires joy and satisfaction and fruitfulness we say, "put the teaching of this chapter to practice." To every preacher and teacher who desires to communicate more effectively we say, "imitate the simplicity and earnestness of the Master in John 15!"

This fifteenth chapter lends itself to excellent continuity when being outlined. We continue our outline of the third main division of the Gospel according to John:

III. The Word Manifested to The Disciples and Their Acceptance of Him. 13:1—20:31

A. Private Instructions and Encouragements, 13:1—17:26
(continued)

3. The Living Union of Christ and His Disciples, 15:1-27

a. Vital Union of Vine and Branches, 15:1-11

(1) The Vine the source of vitality

(2) Pruning needed to produce

(3) Reward of the relationship

b. Frank Union of Friends, 15:12-17

(1) Unlimited Love

(2) Communion of Confidants

(3) Access to Abundance

c. Persevering Union of the Persecuted, 15:18-27

(1) Participation brings persecution

(2) Greater revelation—greater responsibility

(3) Comforter will come

VITAL UNION OF VINE AND BRANCHES

Text 15:1-11

1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.

2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit.

3 Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you.

4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me.

5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing.

6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.

7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

8 Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be my disciples.

9 Even as the Father hath loved me, I also have loved you: abide ye in my love.

10 If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

Queries

- a. How were they cleansed through the word which He had spoken?
v. 3
- b. How are His disciples to abide in Him and He in them? v. 5
- c. What was His joy? v. 11

Paraphrase

I, Myself, am the Vine, the real one. My Father is the Vine-dresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that does bear fruit He prunes and cleanses that it may yield more fruit. You have already received your initial cleansing through faith and obedience to the word which I have spoken to you. Now continue to remain in Me and let Me remain in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit unless it remains in living union with the vine, neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in living union with Me. I, the Vine, am the life-source; you, the branches, are the agents for bearing fruit. The man that dwells in Me and in whom I dwell in this living union, this man bears much fruit. Apart from Me you can do nothing fruitful. If a man is not dwelling in Me in living union, he is thrown away as a branch that is withered and dead and is gathered up with the others, and thrown into the fire and burned. If you continue to abide in Me and let Me abide in you through My words, you may ask whatsoever you will for My sake, and it shall be given unto you. This is the way My Father is glorified and exalted—when you produce much fruit by dwelling in Me. This also is the way you continue to become My disciples—when you continue to produce much fruit. Just as the Father loved Me and His love sustained Me, I also love you and My love for you will sustain you if you dwell in My love. If you keep My commandments you will live and dwell in My love even as I keep My Father's commandments and live and dwell in His love. All of these things I am telling you that you may come to know the same joy that I know and that your joy may be one of fullness.

Summary

Jesus teaches that fruitfulness, adoration of the Father and discipleship is dependent upon living union with Christ, the Vine. All of this results, in turn, in a fullness of joy which Christ Himself knew.

Comment

Let us keep constantly in mind the central theme of these last fleeting hours of private instruction to the disciples: the living union between Christ and His disciples. From the opening of the Passover supper that night until He is arrested in Gethsemane, He uses many different figures of speech and different approaches to illustrate the absolute necessity of this intimate union.

The Passover celebration was always pregnant with Messianic prophecies, types and symbolism carried over from the Jewish Scriptures into the rituals of the night. Jesus had just referred to Himself as the fulfillment of the shadowy sacrifice of the Passover lamb. He had just plainly told them that He came as a ransom for the sins of many. He had referred to the "fruit of the vine" as a symbolic memorial of His blood. Perhaps they had gone out into the night (14:31, "Arise, let us go hence") and on their way from the upper room to Gethsemane had passed the Temple. Now the Temple, as Herod had restored it, had a great vine made of gold entwined and hanging around the door into the Holy Place. The vine is a figure employed prolifically in the Old Testament to typify the chosen Messianic people of God:

- a. The vineyard of the Lord is the house of Israel (Isa. 5:1-7).
- b. I had planted thee a noble vine . . . (Jer. 2:21).
- c. Israel is an empty vine . . . (Hos. 10:1).
- d. "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt" (Psa. 80:8).
- e. See also, Ezek. 15; 19:10.

The vine had actually become the symbol of the nation of Israel. The emblem on the coins of the Maccabees was the vine. It may be that the minds of the disciples, already dwelling on their idea of the temporal Messianic kingdom, were being drawn into further materialistic meanderings as they thought of the Old Testament symbols of Israel, the Lord's vine. They were contemplating their position in this kingdom because of their national heritage as Israelites. But Jesus would have them know that He was the Vine, the *real* Vine, in contrast to the typical vine. Membership in the Messianic kingdom, and all the glorious blessings promised by the prophets, is to be found not by national inheritance but by personal faith and intimate communion in the Person, Jesus Christ, the Son of God and True Vine. It is the same as all the nations of the earth being blessed in Abraham . . . in The Seed (singular, Gal. 3:16) of Abraham.

Whatever prompted the allegory of the Vine, it is one of the most beautiful pieces of rhetoric available for man to feed his soul upon.

And its purpose is to explain both the idealistic and practical sides of the vital union between Christ and all who would be His disciples.

He begins with the emphatic verb-pronoun linking which translated literally means, "I, Myself, am the Vine, the real Vine!" The only fruitful, saving relationship is intimate communion by the disciple with the Person of his Master. He, the Vine, is the source of life for the branch. There is no other source of life for the branch—apart from the Vine the branch not only does not bear fruit, it withers and dies and is burned.

The Father is the Vinedresser, the Husbandman. The Greek word for husbandman is *georgos*, meaning farmer or vinedresser. It is the same word from which we get the proper name in English of *George*. Notice the twofold work of the Husbandman. Every disciple (branch) who does not produce fruit after his own kind (other disciples) is cut off completely, cast forth and burned (v. 6). The whole idea of the allegory is that if there is any real union between the disciple and the Master, there will be some life, and if there is any life there will be some fruit. Therefore, the disciple who has no fruit has no life because he has no real union with his Master. God grant that preachers may be raised up to preach the Word of God with a fervency, purity and communicativeness which will draw all who profess to be "branches" into this intimate, personal union with the Vine. Preachers may organize, delegate and create a furor of activity, but there will be no real fruit until each Christian is in this life-supplying union with Christ.

The "branch" that does abide in the Vine and produce some fruit is cleansed by the Husbandman in order that it may produce more fruit. The vine is grown all over Palestine. It is a plant which needs a great deal of attention if the best fruit is to be produced on it. Each year the vine is drastically pruned that it may produce more and better fruit. We quote Maclaren here:

"We all, in our Christian life, carry with us the two natures—our own poor miserable selves, and the better life of Jesus Christ within us. The one flourishes at the expense of the other; and it is the Husbandman's merciful, though painful work, to cut back unsparingly the rank shoots that come from self, in order that all the force of our lives may be flung into the growing of the cluster which is acceptable to Him . . . let us understand the meaning of all that comes to us. The knife is sharp and the tendrils bleed, and things that seem very beautiful and precious are unsparingly shorn away, and we are left bare, and, as it seems to ourselves, impoverished. But oh! it is all sent that we may fling

our force into the production of fruit unto God. And no stroke will be a stroke too many or too deep if it helps us to that . . ."

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews tells us, "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:11).

The word "cleanse" comes from the Greek word *catharoi* from which we get the English *catharsis* which means to purify. This continual purification of the Christian comes when his faith is put to the test through the chastening of the Lord and tribulations. The branch which continues to draw his life from the Vine not only endures the pruning but is made stronger and more fruitful as a result. We also must be diligent to purify our souls by our obedience to the truth (I Pet. 1:23) and follow after peace with all men and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14).

In verse 3 Jesus tells the disciples that they have already been cleansed ("pruned") to a certain degree through the word which He had taught them. Already, through their reception of His word, certain of the "rank shoots" of worldliness had been cut out of their lives. Already they had accepted the call to discipleship and had sacrificed much and had borne some fruit. The same principle applies here as was stated by Jesus in John 13:10—see our comments on that verse.

Verses 1 through 3 have concentrated on the pruning and cleansing of the branches in order that they might produce much fruit. Now in verses 4 through 7 the concentration is upon the vital union of the branch in the Vine. The branch is *powerless* (Greek here is *ou dunatai*: meaning literally, *no dynamic*) to bear worthwhile fruit apart from the life which the Vine supplies. In the first three verses the great fundamental facts are presented (a) the Vine, (b) the branches, (c) the Vinedresser working for fruit. Upon these three great facts rests the imperative admonition, "Abide in Me . . ." All that is good and true and just and holy in word or deed coming forth from the Christian, originates not in him as branch but has its origin and motivation and power in Jesus Christ, the Vine. If anything good comes from us it is "the mind of Christ in us" (Phil. 2:5-8; Eph. 2:8-10; Col. 1:27-29). Apart from the love of Christ we can do nothing pleasing to God, even though we "give our body to be burned" (I Cor. 13:1-3; Matt. 7:21-23) and "perform miracles."

Not only is it impossible to bear fruit apart from Christ, it is impossible to live! The assumption is that Jesus is warning these disciples who are now "in Him" not to sever that relationship lest they wither and die and be cast into the pyre (Greek *pur*; meaning *fire*).

Being cast into the fire undoubtedly means being cast into hell (cf. Matt. 3:8-12, 7:19, 13:42, 25:41). The wood of the branch has the curious characteristic that it is good for nothing when severed from the vine. It is too soft for any use. At certain times of the year the Jews were required to bring wood offerings to use in the fires on the Temple altar (Neh. 10:34, 13:31). The commandment (Lev. 6:8-13) was that wood of trees were to be burned upon the altar. The wood of the vine was fit for nothing (Ezek. 15:1-5). The only thing that could be done with the wood pruned out of a vine was to make a bonfire of it and destroy it (cf. Isa. 27:11).

Now the important question is: "How may we abide in Him in the Vine-branch relationship of which He speaks?" Is it completely mystical and must we wait upon a mystical revelation apart from the written revelation?

The authoritative word of Christ speaks the only answer in verses 7 through 10. Let us here quote Dr. Maclaren again:

"His abiding in us is . . . the abiding of His words in us; or, to speak more accurately, the abiding of His words in us is . . . the means of His abiding in us. What is meant by Christ's words abiding in us? . . . It means the whole of the conscious nature of a man being, so to speak, saturated with Christ's words; his desires, His understanding, His affections, His will, all being steeped in these great truths which the Master spoke."

If Christ's words are your desires then your desires will harmonize with His will, and "ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." Christ knows what is best for us. He loves us too much to give us our selfish desires and so the abundance of His riches is withheld until our wills are brought into conformity to His will.

To abide in His love (v. 10) is the same as abiding in Him. And how are we to abide in His love? By keeping His commandments just as He kept the Father's commandments. Christ in us is our "hope of glory" (Col. 1:27) and He dwells in us through His word (cf. our sermon notes on the Holy Spirit).

Bearing fruit (which is a result of abiding in Him) is also one of the ways to go on abiding in Him. The word "be" in verse 8 would be better translated "become" (from Greek *ginomai*) indicating that discipleship is a continuing process. We never so much *are* disciples as we are in the process of *becoming* disciples. Bearing fruit has, of course, the highest of all purposes, to bring glory and honor to God the Father. We are to let our lights shine before men in such a way that men may see our fruit and glorify the name of God (Matt. 5:16;

Jn. 3:21; I Pet. 2:12). All of our fruit-bearing and glorifying of God is prompted by our intimate union with Him in keeping His word. Lenski says, ". . . this is how we remain in Jesus: by receiving and permanently holding his utterances, the *bremata* (words) that come from his lips. He in us, and we in Him, the medium and bond of His spiritual union being His spoken Word" (cf. Jn. 15:7-10 with Jn. 8:31).

Verse 11 is the crowning point of this whole discussion. Jesus has laid down the divine formula for finding and filling oneself with joy. It is not a joy of frivolity which the world gives and takes away. It is joy "unspeakable and full of glory" it is the joy which Christ Himself knows. Though He was a man of sorrows while on the earth, there was in His soul that deep and abiding joy which no tribulation could smother. It was prophesied that He would be anointed with the oil of gladness (Psa. 45:7; Heb. 1:9). He found joy in the fact of God's revelation to men (Lk. 10:21); He found joy in saving the lost (Lk. 15); but most of all His joy was in the glory that was set before Him (cf. Heb. 12:2; Jn. 17:3). His joy on earth was found in complete self-surrender in love (Jn. 4:34) and this is where His disciples shall find the same joy (Jn. 13:17).

The plain path which leads to a cup of joy that runneth over is: (a) Abide in Him, (b) bear fruit, (c) glorify the Father. Why are so many Christian people not finding joy and fulfillment in their Christianity? Why are they withered and dead? Because they have not allowed the life-giving, fruit-bearing sustenance of the Word of God and the Spirit of Christ to flow through them. Further, they do not allow the Word to flow out of them as a river of living water, quenching the thirst of the souls of the unsaved; nor are they lights unto the world; nor are they the salt of the earth. They are unfruitful. They are unhappy and bereft of the joy of Christ!

Quiz

1. What background probably prompted Jesus to use the allegory of the Vine and the branches?
2. What is the main purpose of the allegory?
3. What part does the husbandman play in the allegory?
4. Do works and busy activity always indicate fruitfulness? Why?
5. What good is a branch if it does not bear fruit? What happens to it?
6. *How* do we abide in the Vine?
7. What is the joy of Christ and how may His disciples find the same joy?

FRANK UNION OF FRIENDS

Text 15:12-17

12 This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you.

13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

14 Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you.

15 No longer do I call you servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I heard from my Father I have made known unto you.

16 Ye did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

17 These things I command you, that ye may love one another.

Queries

- a. May love be commanded (vs. 12, 17)?
- b. When did Christ call the apostles, "servants"?
- c. How would their fruit abide (v. 16)?

Paraphrase

My one basic precept and commandment is that you continue to love one another in the same kind of love, having the same motive and purpose, with which I have loved you. The world over, men recognize as the supreme evidence of love that a man will voluntarily give up his own life for the sake of his friends. You are My friends if you are willing to let your love for one another rise to such self-sacrifice and thus keep My precepts. You have not been treated as bondslaves. The bondslave is not taken into his master's confidence but simply receives orders and carries them out without knowing the master's plans or purposes. But I have treated you as My friends, for all the plans and purposes which I heard from My Father I have revealed to you. Furthermore, this friendship is of My choosing and development. Our friendship is not on the basis of mutuality and reciprocity, but on the basis of My divine sovereignty and love. I chose you and appointed you as My friends that you may go and produce results from your labors that will remain forever, and that whatever you need from the Father to glorify His name in your labors and carry out His will you know He will give it to you. What I have said to you about My calling you by My divine sovereignty and not from any merit on the part of any of you—and what I have said to you concerning taking you into My confidence as friends—and what I have

said to you about My ultimate love for you has all been said in order that you may keep on loving one another as brothers in Me.

Summary

To prompt the disciples to love one another Jesus tells them: (a) He willingly sacrifices His life for them; (b) He takes them into His confidence as His bosom friends; (c) He does both of these by His own divine election.

Comment

May love be commanded? Can love be ordered into existence? We are sure that it cannot. As one writer has said, "The two ideas of commandment and love do not go well together. You cannot pump up love to order, and if you try you generally produce . . . sentimental hypocrisy, hollow and unreal." Nevertheless, we are able to direct our attention to things or persons outside ourselves and we are able to do battle against self-absorption and self-love. This ability of directing the conscious thoughts and feelings away from self which is under our control may also be commanded. Therefore, if we will concentrate on and give our attention to Jesus and to others, love will be motivated. Hence we will be following His command to love one another even in the same way He loved. He counted the being on equality with God a thing not to be grasped, but emptied Himself and took the form of a servant and became obedient unto a self-sacrificing death (Phil. 2:5-10). If we follow in His steps we shall be carrying out His commandment.

There is an air of completeness and all-sufficiency about this commandment (v. 12). It seems as if Jesus were saying, "This is all that you, as a group, will need to carry out My appointment." They needed no rank or complicated organization amongst them to bear fruit for Him; they needed only to love one another with the same kind of love, having the same motive and purpose, as the love which Jesus gave to them. It is to be a brotherly love that is "unfeigned" and "fervent" (I Pet. 1:22, 3:8; I Jn. 2:14-18, 4:7-11). This love of the brethren is the mark by which the world discerns those who are the disciples of Jesus (Jn. 13:34-35). It is still the one all-sufficient requisite for His disciples today. The church of the living Christ is more apt to bear abundant and abiding fruit today if its members love one another from the heart fervently, than it is through all the superstructure of world-wide ecclesiastical organization. Lack of brotherly love is the symptom of an even deeper evil—hate for God (I Jn. 4:20-21), and how is a man to bear righteous fruit for the glory of God if he hates both God and his brother?

In verse 13 Jesus states a principle that is generally accepted among

all men as the ultimate love. Man has no greater gift to offer, no greater sacrifice to make for another than his very life. It is the most here deeper than mere sacrifice of the physical life. What Jesus desires is laying down of "self" upon the altar of love. A man may even give his body to be burned and have not love (I Cor. 13:3). One may even lay down his physical life from a self-glorifying, self-gratifying motive. The love of which Jesus speaks is a love which "counts others better than self," which *denies self* even if the physical body remain alive.

Jesus takes another of the forms of mortal love, friendship (vs. 14-15), and glorifies and exalts it by exercising it to the divine degree. Jesus glorified the estate of family love when He taught, "He that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother" (Mk. 3:31-35). He glorified the estate of husband-wife love when He inspired the apostle to write the great dissertation on Christ and the church (Eph. 5:22-32). But the important thing to notice here is the reciprocal nature of the friendship. First there is the divine condescension that Christ chooses to allow men to be His friends. Then there is the condition which men have to fulfill to come into this relationship of *friendship-by-grace*. We are His friends only on the condition that we do the things which He has commanded.

But what a friendship that is once the circle has been completed! There are no limitations in that friendship on His part. He sacrifices self (vs. 12-13). And we are taken into close fellowship with Him, we are made to become confidants of His. Those who believe and trust Jesus and keep His commandments find that their relationship to Him grows into one of friendship rather than the drudgery of slavish and unintelligent oppression. The slave is given orders and is never taken into the confidence of his master as to the master's purposes and plans. But Jesus tells His friends everything He can concerning the plans and purposes of the Father. There is much that all of His friends cannot understand (Jn. 16:12), for His thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways (Isa. 55:8-11). But what we can understand He *frankly and plainly* tells us. And even in those things which He withholds (things which we think we would be better for knowing) He does so out of love. A friend exercises reticence as well as frankness, when reticence is to the loved one's profit. But, of that which we most certainly need to know, He is very frank to say, "If it were not so, I would have told you!"

And in elevating those who believe in Him from slaves to friends He also took off them the chains of their bondage to ignorance, sin

and fear. His yoke is easy and the burden light (Matt. 11:25-30), but the weight of ignorance, guilt of sin and fear of death before He took us as friends was unbearable (Matt. 23:4; Acts 15:10; Heb. 2:15).

Actually, the relationship of Master and slave is not broken when Jesus chooses us to be His friends. The "slaves" remain slaves of their own choice. They serve Him as freed men bringing themselves into slavery to Him of their own volition and love for Him (cf. Rom. 1:1; II Pet. 1:1; Jude 1).

Verse 16 makes it very plain that our relation to Him as friends is dependent first and foremost upon His divine willingness and grace. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly . . . God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:6, 8). We were apprehended by Him (Phil. 3:12). We were divinely elected, but that was made eons ago potentially "in Christ" (Eph. 1:3-14). Potentially all men are elected to be saved, but only "In Christ." Man then must exercise his freedom to choose whether he desires this election or not by coming "into Christ" or remaining out of Him by obedience to His commandments (I Jn. 2:3-6, 2:27, 5:1-4, etc.). Even among these first disciples they were chosen by election but they themselves had to choose whether or not they wished that election. One (Judas Iscariot) refused the divine election. Even here they must go and bear fruit if they desire to "make their calling and election sure" (cf. II Pet. 1:2-11). Yes, the Shepherd always seeks the lost sheep before the sheep seeks the Shepherd, but the sheep must hear and follow the voice of the Shepherd to realize the safety and bountifulness of the fold.

And so, the disciples were chosen and appointed (or commissioned) with special gifts of the Holy Spirit in order that they might go and bear fruit. They were to go and sow the precious seed of the Word and reap a harvest of souls. This harvest of souls and the establishment of the church of Christ on earth was to be an abiding monument to their faith in Christ. The church itself, upon its establishment, was to be henceforth eternal, made up of living stones. And so is the fruit of the labors of every evangelist and Bible teacher who has ever had any part in winning a soul to Christ or of strengthening a soul in Christ. They are laying up for themselves treasures in heaven which are eternal, they will receive an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, that fadeth not away.

And now, in summation, all that He had said to them of their election by grace—His taking them into His confidence as friends—about His own self-sacrificing love—all this has been said to provoke them

Because what they ask will be in His name, in accordance with His will and desires for man. When we make our wishes and desires Christ's, and Christ's desires ours, we shall be satisfied.

Quiz

1. How may we carry out the command to "love one another"?
2. What must a man "lay down" to love ultimately?
3. What is the condition on man's part in friendship with Christ?
4. What are two differences between a slave and a friend according to the Scriptures?
5. How are men elected by God? Is man involved in this "divine election"?
6. May men today bear "abiding fruit"? How?
7. How may we "have whatsoever we ask in the Father's name"?

PERSEVERING UNION OF THE PERSECUTED

Text 15:18-27

18 If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before it hated you.

19 If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

20 Remember the word that I said unto you, A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also.

21 But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

22 If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no excuse for their sin.

23 He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

24 If I had not done among them the works which none other did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

25 But this cometh to pass, that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me:

27 and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

Queries

- a. How had Jesus chosen the disciples "out of the world"?
- b. How does Jesus' speaking to the people bring sin (v. 22)?

c. In what way would the Comforter bear witness of Christ?

Paraphrase

Do not be overcome with despair when the world hates you, but take courage by understanding why the world hated me before it hated you. If your nature and character were worldly, the world would love you. But because your nature is not now in harmony with the world, due to My word which is now in you and has set you apart from the world, for this very reason the world despises you. You must keep on remembering the precept which I have taught you: A servant cannot hope to enjoy a better life than his master. If the worldlings have persecuted Me, the Master, they will most certainly persecute you, the servant. If any of them have kept My word, they will keep your word also which will be the word of the Master's appointed servants. And all of these persecutions they will bring upon you due to their hatred of Me because they do not know and love the One who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them the plain and final revelation of God they would not have been so acutely aware of their sinfulness. But now that I have come and they have rejected Me and My word they shall be condemned more severely, for they have no excuse whatever for their unbelief. Whoever hates Me, hates God My Father also. Moreover, if I had not proved My deity and Messiahship to the Jews through the works which I did—and no other messenger of God has ever done such works—they would not be guilty of the terrible sin of rejecting the Messiah. But now they are compelled by the miracles to recognize that the Father is with Me and so in hating Me they hate both Me and My Father. And the Father is using all this hatred to fulfill His plan of redemption in Me which He prophesied in their Scriptures, "They hated me without a cause." But when the Helper comes, the Person whom I will send from the Father to be with you, I mean the Spirit of Truth, He will be a divine personality bearing witness to Me and sustaining the witness which you, who have been with Me from the beginning of My ministry, shall also make concerning Me to the world.

Summary

His disciples will be persecuted because the world hates Him. The world hates Him because of the perfect piercing revelation He made of God's righteousness. God will use the world's hatred to fulfill His redemptive purposes. They are not to despair in their persecution for they will have the divine Helper to sustain them in their work of witnessing.

precious possession he has. And if any man will lay down his life for a friend he has loved him as fully as he is able. But there is something

Comment

The vital union between Christ and His followers results in a fellowship of fruitfulness (vs. 1-11); a fellowship of confidence and communion (vs. 12-17); this union also results in a fellowship of suffering! Because this unity binds them into one sanctified body, it separates them from all those who do not wish to participate in this holy calling. Jesus came to call men apart from the world. This naturally results in enmity on the part of the world (Matt. 10:34-39).

The "if" of verse 18 does not mean "there may be the possibility that the world will hate you." In the original Greek idiom it means "there is no question but that the world hates you."

Why should the world hate those whose very purpose is to do good? First, those who seek to do good must seek to propagate truth. What the Christian believes and teaches to be precious, the world regards as valueless. Much of what the Christian regards to be wrong, the world regards as right. Second, the righteous life of the Christian is a constant rebuke and judgment on unrighteous living and is, therefore, in direct opposition to the worldly life. All of this is because the world is out of harmony with the will of God. Men of the world walk by sight and not by faith. Their main interest is in satisfying the desires of the flesh and the pride of life. They have no concern for the hereafter. They are only after the "here." It all depends upon what a man judges to be valuable—it depends on where the treasure is, for there will the heart be also. If a man loves darkness, he will hate the light (cf. our comments on Jn. 3:18-21).

There is an alternative! If the follower of Christ would escape the hostility of the world and become one of the world's "hail, fellow, well met" children, all the Christian need do is lower his flag, cover up his badge and "do as the Romans do" and he will be loved by the world. As Maclaren puts it, "A half-Christianized world and a more than half-secularized Church get on well together . . . why should the world care to hate or trouble itself about a professing Church, large parts of which are only a bit of the world under another name?" When Christian people and churches become vain, earthly, sensual, given to pleasure, wealth, and ambition, the world will not oppose them . . . BUT GOD WILL!

But true disciples of Jesus are not of the world. When Jesus calls men out from the world and sanctifies them by His word, His Spirit abides in them (cf. Jn. 17:13-19). Henceforth they seek to make their every thought and deed captive to His will. Because they have overcome the world by faith and Christ now lives in them, the world hates them and makes war upon them (cf. II Tim. 3:12).

There are three approaches Jesus makes to prepare and arm His "little children" for their trying hours ahead. First, He tells them plainly that they must expect persecution. Fore-warned is fore-armed. Had He disguised or tempered His warning it would have been the worse for them when the persecution, in all its terribleness, came upon them. He told them plainly that they would be betrayed by parents and brethren and even put to death (cf. Lk. 21:12-17). Second, He tells them that whatever they may have to suffer, they can take heart in the fact that He, their Master, has suffered like persecution and hatred before them. The servant should be proud to share in tribulations with One who is so much greater than he, and regard his suffering a privilege rather than a burden (vs. 18 and 20). (cf. also II Cor. 4:17-18; Phil. 3:10; Jas. 1:2-4; I Pet. 4:12-16.) Third, Jesus tells these men that the world's hatred is a necessary outcome of their being called into fellowship with Him. They may either forfeit the privileges of such a fellowship and go back to the world, or they may retain the peace, hope and love of this fellowship and suffer the tribulations that necessarily accompany such an election. When He said "remember" He was referring to when He first sent them out. He warned them then that they would be hated and persecuted (cf. Matt. 10:16-25).

If men are of the attitude to obey God and His Son, they will obey the words of God's messengers—when God's messengers speak God's word. The apostles were inspired and thus their messages had the inherent authority of God. Men today who are spokesmen for God may expect true followers of Christ to heed their preaching but only so long as their preaching conforms to the written Word of God, the Bible. When men do not heed the word of Christ, it shows that they have not the love of the Father in them (cf. Jn. 5:42-43, 8:43-47).

In verses 22 through 25 are some of the most solemn words to ever fall from the lips of the Saviour of men. He plainly declares that by both His teachings and His miraculous works He demonstrated enough proof of His Sonship, Messiahship that men who reject Him have absolutely no excuse. In comparison with the sin of not listening to His words, and being taught by His works, all other sins dwindle into nothing. Jesus does not mean to say that these men would have been clear of all sin. The Jew was condemned by the Law; the Gentile committed sins against his conscience (cf. Rom. 1 and 2). But as black as these sins are, they are white compared with the blackness of the to love one another. He does not merely command love but with the command supplies the motive. And Christ's friends, living close to Him, and bearing fruit will get what they ask from the Father. Why?

sin of rejecting the revelation of God in His Son, Jesus Christ. The rejection of the Messiah was the crowning act of rebellion by the Jews against God which brought down the vengeance of God and caused them to become a "by-word among the nations." They rejected the "Great Prophet" (cf. Deut. 18:15-16; Acts 3:22-23). How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation (cf. Heb. 2:1-4)?

As light comes to a man and increases, so his responsibility to follow and live in the light increases (cf. Lk. 12:47-48). See also our comments on Jn. 9:35-41. "The measure of the guilt is the brightness of the light." No shadows are so black as those which are cast by the brightest noonday sun and no sin is so black as the rejection of the revelation of God in His Son who was "in the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person."

Jesus "spake as no other man" had spoken; He did works which no other prophet had ever done—not even Moses. The proof is so clear that men cannot plead ignorance. To most men the gospel has been so often presented that they cannot say they have had no opportunity. There is no excuse for their sin. They do not know the time of their visitation (cf. Lk. 19:41-44).

And the terribleness of this sin of hating Christ and His disciples is made even worse in that it is irrational and unreasonable. It is hatred without a cause. Jesus said that this hatred was foreknown by God and prophesied in the Old Testament. It was all within the purpose of God. It would be used by God to carry out His redemptive plan in Christ, the Lamb, the Suffering Servant. The same hatred by the enemies of God was shown to God's king David, but the final fulfillment of the worst that such hatred could do come from God's enemies against the One of whom David was but the shadowy type, the eternal Son of David. This prophecy is in Psalms 35:19 and 69:4—sometimes the entire Old Testament was called the law (including poetry, history and prophets). But Jesus had broken no law, injured no one, hated no one. To the contrary He sought only to do good to friend and enemy alike. What cause or reason had anyone for hating Jesus? What cause or reason has anyone today for hating Jesus? Some evil words and works have been done by evil men in the name of Jesus and His church, but the Word of Christ proclaimed and lived in the spirit of Christ has always sought the good of friend and enemy alike. What reason can the world give for hating true disciples of Jesus? None!

Now the climax to this section. He has poured out the deepest longings of His heart that they will persevere during the persecution that will inevitably come upon them. So now He promises again the

"Comforter." This is the Holy Spirit, that divine Person He promised and described in the preceding chapter. He will come as the Helper. In their witnessing to the world they will have the companionship and fellowship of this divine One. As eyewitnesses they must testify concerning Jesus (cf. Acts 1:21-22, 4:19, etc.). The Holy Spirit would come to them and guide them infallibly in calling to their remembrance, without error, what they had seen with their own eyes and heard with their own ears (cf. I Jn. 1:1-4; II Pet. 1:16-21) and He would guide them into all truth which Christ had not yet taught them. But more than this, the Holy Spirit would accompany the apostles and bear witness to Jesus through the miracles He wrought through them (cf. Heb. 2:4).

If, then, God be for us, who can be against us (cf. Rom. 8:35-39)!

Quiz

1. Why does the world hate Christ and His followers?
2. Name the three ways in which Jesus prepared the disciples for the persecution to come upon them?
3. What is indicated of men today who will not listen and obey gospel preaching?
4. What did Jesus mean when He said "If I had not come . . . they had not had sin"?
5. Why do men, who have had opportunity to hear of Christ, have no excuse for their sin?
6. Why is hatred of Christ irrational and unreasonable?
7. In what ways would the Holy Spirit bear witness to Jesus?

EXPOSITORY SERMON FIFTEEN

THE LIVING UNION OF CHRIST AND HIS DISCIPLES

John 15:1-27

Introduction

- I. WHAT HAS BEEN SAID BEFORE LEADS UP TO THIS
 - A. Chapter 14 speaks of the beginning or birth of the union between Christ and His disciples.
 1. If they love Him and keep His word He will manifest Himself to them, 14:21.
 2. If they love Him and keep His commandments, He will be in them . . . He will dwell in them, 14:16-17, 23.
 - B. He must go away, but He will return to dwell within each disciple who by faith and love keeps His word.
- II. NOW INSTRUCTIONS ARE GIVEN ON HOW THIS LIVING UNION IS MAINTAINED
 - A. There is that which the disciple must do to maintain the union.