



IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE  
by Denis Wheadon

The Open Bible Trust / Grace Publications Inc.

# *In My Father's House*

*By Denis Wheadon*

*Devotional Meditations from  
St. John's Gospel—Chapters 13-17*

Quotations are from the *New International Version*  
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Originally published in 1994 by the Open Bible Trust [UK]  
and Grace Publications Inc [USA]

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The original publication is now out of print.

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## Introduction

In his last letter, the Apostle Paul tells us that, 'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work' (2 Timothy 3:16-17). This being the case, what lessons can be learnt from the words of Jesus to His disciples in the upper room just before His trial and crucifixion which are of profit and value to us living today?

There is a message for every one of us in every book of the Bible, although it has been suggested by some that we cannot take every verse, and every word, and say that it applies to us. As someone has said, 'all Scripture is for us, but not all is about us.' Be that as it may, what better example of a profitable and valuable message for us today can there be than the words of Jesus recorded from the latter half of chapter thirteen to the end of chapter seventeen of St. John's Gospel? To obtain the maximum benefit from this devotional study, which is able to take only selected verses, it is suggested that these chapters be read in full first.

Jesus said, 'In my Father's house are many rooms.' Bearing in mind that this is a devotional meditation rather than a doctrinal treatise, the words of the well-known Bible commentator, Matthew Henry, seem appropriate here.

*'Heaven is a house, not a tent or a tabernacle; it is a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. It is a Father's house: my Father's house; and His Father is our Father.'*

In the words of the American writer, Warren W. Wiersby:

*'According to Jesus, heaven is a real place. It is not a product of religious imagination or the result of a psyched-up mentality, looking for "pie in the sky by and by". Heaven is the place where God dwells and where Jesus sits today at the right hand of the Father . . . Heaven is "My Father's House", according to the Son of God. It is "home" for God's children!'*

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In this context we look now at our Father's house through devotional eyes! As we look into the rooms we will be amazed at the treasures and riches untold we will find. Just what will we find? The words of Jesus in the upper room give us some clues as to the nature of these and the resulting blessings for His faithful disciples who are to benefit from the 'contents' of these rooms. In this small booklet, bearing in mind that the approach is purely devotional, I attempt to put before the reader a few of these clues to the treasures and riches to be found *in my Father's house*.

Denis Wheadon

### **In my Father's house**

It was not until Judas Iscariot had left the upper room that Jesus began His serious discourse to His disciples. He had spoken many words before, including the institution of the Last Supper, but it was not until He was alone with His disciples that He began to share the more personal, more intimate, things with them. The Bible says concerning Judas Iscariot: 'When he was gone, Jesus said...' (13:31). These words were not for the ears of a traitor.

So as modern day disciples of Jesus, we are privileged to share in His words today. But it is necessary to inject a note of caution. We must recognise the fact that there are occasions in Scripture where the words of Jesus are directed specifically at one person, as to Peter in Matthew 16:23, or to a group of people, as to the Twelve Apostles in Matthew 16:9, to take but two examples. Where this is obvious it would be foolish to try and apply these words to us personally.

However, the majority of the words spoken by Jesus to His disciples, especially in the upper room, are meant for us, too. They may have been spoken nearly two thousand years ago, but they are as up-to-date as tomorrow's newspaper. And they are more important, more vital, more far-reaching, than any modern news report. As we have already said, there is profit and value for us living today in these personal and intimate

words of Jesus.

***Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself and will glorify him at once (13:31,32).***

These words of Jesus, uttered immediately after Judas Iscariot had left the upper room with the express purpose of betraying Him, are a poignant reminder of the reason why the Lord left His Father's house in the first place, why He entered into this sordid world nearly two thousand years ago and became a man.

At this moment in the upper room discourse, Jesus was fully committed to His death on the Cross. No young man of thirty-three *wants* to die, especially the agonizing death of crucifixion, the recognised form of public execution in those days. If there had been any other way, no doubt Jesus would have taken it. But it is obvious that at this moment in the upper room, alone with His eleven faithful disciples, deep in His soul, the Lord *knew* that He would die for my sins, for your sins, for the sins of the whole world. Jesus *knew* that there was no other way. This was why He had come to earth and taken on humanity. And the reason why He said that He was now glorified and that God His Father was glorified, too, was because of His total commitment.

It would be true to say that the actual crucifixion was really the culmination of the redemptive work which, although planned from the beginning of time, actually began its final stage at that moment in the upper room. There was now no turning back, and Jesus knew it. He did not say "will be glorified" but "*now* is glorified"—the matter was virtually settled.

"There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin. He only could unlock the gates of heaven and let us in," says the hymn writer. His redemptive work was almost complete. There was only the Cross left; and, as we look back through the mists of time, we are humbled by the knowledge that He did it all for us. When God glorified His Son in Himself "at once"—at that moment—He had you and me in mind: a humbling thought indeed.

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His words were directed *to* His disciples, and His later words, directed to His Father on behalf of His disciples, were not intended for only the eleven in the upper room. Likewise, the culmination of His redemptive work, the crucifixion and resurrection, for which “now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in Him”, was not just for those faithful eleven only. All who acknowledge Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, seeking to follow Him by subjecting themselves to His discipline, become His disciples. His words *to* and on behalf *of* His disciples include you and me. Let our minds ponder that truth for a moment.

Such an inclusion gives us immediate assurance of a place in our Father's house; of a place in the Heavenly Realms. “God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6). Not only that, God “has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). How great a blessing it is to know that He gives us immediate status not only as disciples, but also of children—God's children, for He is our heavenly Father as revealed by Jesus. Indeed, our Lord refers to His disciples as His children.

***My children, I will be with you only a little longer... where I am going you cannot come (13:33).***

His disciples meant so much to Him that Jesus actually called them “little children” (*KJV*). He wanted to protect them just as any earthly father wants to protect his children in a time of danger or impending disaster. We have to realise that at this point Jesus knew the immediate future which was still hidden from the disciples.

The Lord loved His disciples as a father loves his children. He wanted only the best for them and would do all in His power to help them—even to die on the Cross—just as an earthly father seeks only the best for his children. Even such a father's love pales into insignificance in the light of our Heavenly Father's love. And the amazing fact is that we are His disciples; we are His children; He loves us.

With this assurance, we know that He wants to protect us, that He loves

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us with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3), that He wants only the best for us. Moment by moment He is helping us through this life until we are able to enter our Father's house, to join our risen Saviour who is even now at the right hand of God our Father in the Heavenly Realms (Ephesians 1:20), and inherit all that He has prepared for us there.

*Moment by moment I'm kept in His love;  
Moment by moment I've life from above;  
Looking to Jesus 'till glory doth shine;  
Moment by moment, O Lord, I am Thine.*

This is assurance indeed; and, once again, as we look back through the mists of time, we are humbled—yet thrilled—with the sure knowledge that Jesus will never leave us today, never leave any who truly love Him and acknowledge Him as Saviour and Lord. As He declared Himself, “Surely I am with you always to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:30). This is a profound advantage that we have over the disciples in that upper room. They had, at that moment, only the prospect of Jesus leaving them. Our prospect is very different.

It is true that the disciples would eventually realise that Jesus would be with them through His Spirit; as yet, this promise was still in the future for them. But it is very much in the present for us. In the meantime, Jesus hastened on by giving them a new command.

***A new command I give you; love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another (13:34).***

It may be a new command but it is also a very difficult command. Indeed, Jesus Himself would be the first to recognise that this is not as easy as it sounds. It has been said that sometimes the hardest person for a Christian to love is another Christian. Whilst this may be a generalisation there is, regretfully, an element of truth in it. Yet Jesus is saying here, “love one another”. Elsewhere in Scripture we are commanded to love the unlovely, to love our enemies, and we will turn to that in a moment; but here we are commanded to love our fellow Christian brothers and sisters.

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We take our example from Jesus. As He loves so must we love. The disciples in the upper room, and latter day disciples too, are told to love one another, for it is by this loving of each other that all men will know that we are His disciples. As Christians, then, we must love all other Christians. I remember someone saying to me many years ago (I believe he was a retired minister) that he found great difficulty in liking some of the members of his church, so he allowed himself to just *not* like them. “But you still have to love them for Christ’s sake,” he added. I knew what he meant. It is not easy but it is necessary. This is why we can come to Jesus and seek His forgiveness when we fail; and, if we are honest, we do fail—often.

How can we love as He loved? We begin by loving each other, our fellow Christians, so that all who do not love the Lord—the unlovely, our enemies, those who make no profession of faith—will know that we are His disciples. And as His disciples, recognised as such by our love, if we continue to love as Jesus loved, we will find that our love is extended beyond our Christian circle to those we said earlier we would turn to in our thinking. All the commands of Jesus are based on love, so as we love each other more in obedience to those commands, the more we will find ourselves loving others, also in obedience to His commands.

Jesus loved the unlovely, the unlovable—how do we react when we are confronted by the non-too-clean character, perhaps sidling into the pew next to us during the service on Sunday evening? What are our feelings when the vagrant approaches us, smelling of strong drink, and asking for the price of a cup of tea? Then there is the unhelpful colleague at work, in the office, factory, the shop, who has made life a misery for us, who has been unkind, spiteful, now seeking our help because of a change in his or her circumstances—how do we respond? It is not easy to love the unlovely, the unlovable.

Jesus loved those who hated Him. There are few, if any, who do not have enemies. They are the fortunate few, for most of us do have enemies, either real or imagined. It is easy to hate them, to plan some evil against them, even if we have no intention of carrying it out. Someone has said, “revenge is sweet”. There is a sense of satisfaction in being able to get

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our own back on our enemies, but it is not a lasting satisfaction, nor is it God's way. His way is to love our enemies, to bless them who curse us, do good to those who hate us, and pray for those who are unkind to us, even those who actually persecute us (Matthew 5:44). That is God's way. It is not easy to love those who hate us.

But we come back to what Jesus said specifically in that upper room as we conclude this section, for it is important that we *love* each other, even though we may not always *like* each other, and sometimes with good reason. Jesus loved His disciples, even though they failed Him, betrayed Him, denied Him, turned away from Him, hurt Him, deserted Him. Can we, who claim to be His disciples, treat our fellow Christians, our fellow disciples, in a lesser way? Perhaps our prayer should be: help us to love other Christians even when they let us down, when they hurt us; but more important still, help us to love in such a way that we will not let others down, will not hurt others, for Christ's sake. It is not easy, but we must try.

And the reason that we *must* try is because Jesus said that by this all men will know that we are His disciples, if we love one another. He has commanded it and we *must* obey, because we *are* His disciples, and we want everyone to know that we belong to Him by our love for others—especially other Christians.

It is not easy. Jesus recognises that it is not easy. So our constant prayer must surely be: help us, dear Lord, to love more like You, to love as You love.

***Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later (13:36).***

When Jesus said these words to Peter in reply to his question, “Lord, where are you going?”, what did Jesus actually mean? Did He mean that the disciples would one day, as a result of the Lord's death and resurrection, be able to follow Him into Heaven itself? Or did He mean that, after He had ascended and after Peter had been filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, he would follow the Lord in dedicated service? Or did He

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mean, in speaking specifically to Peter, that the disciple would follow his Lord in death by way of crucifixion, further emphasised in John 21:18,19? Tradition has it that Peter was crucified upside down because he did not feel worthy in identical fashion to Jesus.

There are several schools of thought in answer to this question. There are those, for example, who cannot accept that the disciples ever thought about following Jesus into Heaven. They say that we must not read into earlier Scriptures the teachings and promises made to later Gentile believers. The disciples have their marvellous promises, and we have ours. We should not confuse them. I can accept this, although it is important to again remind ourselves at this point of the devotional nature of this study.

If we think about it carefully, whichever interpretation we put upon Christ's answer to Peter's question, each is a way of blessing. Continuing to look through devotional eyes we see that, if we are faithful to the end of our earthly life, we will one day follow Jesus and be seated in the Heavenly Realms with Him, (Ephesians 2:5-7). A tremendous thought, although the time has not yet come for us to follow Him *that* way. So where does that leave us now?

As His faithful followers we can follow Jesus in dedicated discipleship; we can know something of the power of His Holy Spirit in our life; we can serve Him for the rest of our earthly life, then one day meet Him face to face in Heaven, where we will receive His "well done!" Let us give thanks to the Lord for giving us this assurance from His Word, as we promise Him that we *will* follow Him, all the way to Heaven, to the Heavenly Realms, to where He has gone to prepare that place for us "In My Father's House".

But Jesus had not finished with Peter yet. The Lord had a question of His own to ask that disciple.

***Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the cock crows, you will disown me three times (13:38).***

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It is very easy to condemn Peter, to say that he should have known better, that he was so terribly, terribly wrong to deny Jesus—as we know that he did later. At this point in the narrative, of course, this denial was still in the future. But Jesus was right when He said, “you will disown me.” He knew.

Yet would we be very different? If we are honest the answer is “no”. Jesus knows that there have been times in our life when we have denied Him, disowned Him, and not just three times, either. It is so easy to make promises, very often on the spur of the moment, in a fit of enthusiasm, perhaps in some highly charged emotional meeting, but God knows the extent of our true commitment. Jesus knew that Peter would deny Him. He knows our innermost feelings also. So many times we have failed Him, and in so many ways.

It is no consolation, neither is it any excuse, for us to know that, not only we ourselves, but *all* God’s children everywhere, in every age, have denied Jesus at some time or another. One of us have any right to condemn Peter for his actions. Even in the act of condemning someone else we are, in a sense, disowning Jesus, because the Lord did not condemn Peter; He forgave him.

Perhaps it would help us at this time to pause for a moment and, if necessary, seek the Lord’s forgiveness for those occasions when we have denied or disowned Him. This in itself will help us to forgive others, so see only the best in others; for, like us, we must suppose that they do not deliberately set out to deny Jesus. So as He forgives us, as He forgave Peter, so He will help us to forgive others and not condemn.

***Do not let your heart be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me (14:1).***

So often these days we let things trouble us unnecessarily, yet we need not if we only obeyed the voice of the Lord. There is so much in this world to trouble us, to distress and frustrate us, that sometimes it is easier just to let ourselves be troubled. But this is not God’s way for us.

We need the help of Jesus to obey His words; we need the help of Jesus

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to be able to follow the pattern that He has set for us. We know that often we *let* our hearts be troubled, yet we *need* not. If we accept the truth of God's Word, we *will* not, because we will be trusting in Him.

In another translation of the Bible, Jesus says, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." What should we believe? We believe that God is our Heavenly Father. We believe that God is our Personal Saviour. We believe that our Father and our Saviour are One. When we believe in God as our Father we are believing in God also as our Saviour (Luke 1:47; 1 Timothy 1:1).

Just as our Father is eternal, so is our Saviour. Just as our Father is alive, so is our Saviour. Just as our Father loves us, cares for us, wants only the best for us, so does our Saviour. Because we believe in God like this, we are able to obey Him when He tells us not to let our hearts be troubled. Our trust in God is echoed by our trust in Jesus; our trust in our Father is echoed by our trust in His Son, our Saviour.

So perhaps we can promise Him that in the future we will try to worry *less* as we seek to believe in Him *more*. It really is worth the effort, especially if we are expecting to enjoy the treasures and untold riches of our Father's house, with the resulting blessings reserved for His disciples to be found among the contents of those rooms, those spiritual blessings in Christ in the Heavenly Realms which He has promised.

***In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you (14:2).***

Homelessness seems to be a world problem today, whether on the streets of London or New York or any other major city; whether in the deserts of Africa or in the mountains of the Middle East; whether in the countries which formed the Soviet Union [this was written in 1994 before the collapse of the Soviet Union], or what used to be called Yugoslavia. No matter where, it is a problem. It makes the headlines, and it is tragic. In an ideal world, everyone would have some permanent place where he or she can call home. But we do not live in an ideal world.

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Making less of the headlines and receiving somewhat less attention is the equally tragic situation of spiritual homelessness. The world is full of people who have no spiritual home, yet there is room for everyone in our Father's house. How do we know? Jesus said so. As the Scottish theologian, William Barclay, so aptly put it: Jesus said,

“‘There are many abiding places in my Father's house.’ By His Father's house He meant heaven. But what did He mean when He said there were many abiding places in heaven? The word for *abiding places* is the word *monai*... ‘There are many abiding places in my Father's house’ may simply mean that in heaven there is room for all. An earthly house becomes overcrowded; an earthly inn must sometimes turn away the weary traveller because its accommodation is exhausted. It is not so with our Father's house, for heaven is as wide as the heart of God and there is room for all.”

If we parallel the physical world with the spiritual, we will quickly discover by way of illustration the problems of homelessness. There are many reasons for being homeless. For some, it is forced upon them by circumstances beyond their control; for other, it may be by choice, a seeking after freedom from the restraints of society, a refusal to accept the disciplines of modern living. There may even be those who have known no other way of life, because they were born into it, or at least they can remember nothing different because they have been homeless for so long.

It has been said, and sadly sometimes it is true, that the greatest hindrance to becoming a Christian can be another Christian. This may be a generalisation, which can be dangerous and misleading, but there is an element of truth in it. Some people are spiritually homeless because they have been “driven away” by those who should have known better. An unkind word, a thoughtless action, can create circumstances that foster spiritual homelessness. One can almost say that they are homeless due to circumstances beyond their control.

Sometimes the restraints and disciplines imposed upon would-be Christians go beyond those imposed by the Lord in His Word. Jesus said, “My yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:30). Sadly, there are

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occasions when man seeks to reverse that saying, making the yoke hard and the burden heavy, involving the Christian in a way of life unacceptable to the vast majority, with the result of more spiritual homelessness. How important it is that we do not introduce into our churches man-made rules and regulations which effectively negate God's Word and keep the seeking soul out of our Father's house.

Our responsibility as true disciples of Jesus Christ is to assure the spiritually homeless that there is a place for them within the Christian community, and as such there is a place for them also in our Father's House and that Jesus has gone to prepare it for them. In fact, there is more to it than that. Jesus is coming back again to take us to that place which He has gone to prepare for us. This is a tremendous promise. The phrase "care for the homeless" takes on a new meaning when backed with a promise like that, adding a sense of urgency to our responsibility to share the truth. Jesus, then, has made a definite promise.

***I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am (14:3).***

If there was ever any doubt in our minds about the second coming of Jesus Christ, that doubt should be completely dispelled by these words. If there was no other reference in the Bible to this great world event, this future earth-shattering occurrence, this verse alone would be sufficient. Jesus said it, and that should be good enough for all of us. What can be more simple, more straightforward, more plain than "I will come back"?

In fact, Jesus made two tremendous promises here. He promised us His return, and He promised us His presence. We are not to be left alone. And this is not just a spiritual presence, as now, but a personal presence face to face in the future. Jesus said, "I will come back and take you to be with me." This is a plain statement and a definite promise. Then He said, "that you may also be where I am." That is another statement, another promise.

When He fulfils His promise, the timing of His return, is not so very important. What is vitally important, however, is that we should be spiritually ready to receive Him, knowing that He is definitely coming

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again, although we do not know when, and equally ready to enjoy His companionship when He takes us to be with Himself.

We should bear in mind that, although Jesus was talking to His disciples in that upper room nearly two thousand years ago that He would be coming back for them so that they could be where He was, Jesus is also speaking to His disciples today just wherever we happen to be. It is important, however, not to confuse the hope of the disciples of the first century and our own in the twentieth century [now the twenty-first century]. We are told that when Christ appears we shall appear with Him in glory (Colossians 3:4), and our appearance will be in the Heavenly Realms (Ephesians 2:6,7). But the disciples of Jesus' day looked for the return to earth (Matthew 24:30,31), and the gathering of Israel, and the setting up of the kingdom on earth,, in which they would have had a major part.

So, from this, we may assume that it is unlikely that we will be together with these earlier Jewish disciples. Whatever our thinking on this subject, the truly exciting prospect is that Jesus is coming back for us so that we can be where *He* is for ever. By acknowledging Jesus Christ as our Saviour *now* in the present, we can be sure that we will be among that number who will be received unto Himself when He comes again in the future.

We need to be absolutely sure of our relationship with Jesus, though, to be sure of His taking us to be with Himself as He promises. Of course, the basis of any lasting relationship must be love, and Jesus has something to say about this, too.

***If you love me, you will obey what I command (14:15).***

It is just that. It is so simple, isn't it? But its power lies in its simplicity. It is indeed a very powerful statement, especially as it involves our personal relationship with Jesus Christ Himself. The measure of our obedience to a command is governed by the depth of our affection for the one who gives that command. A child will obey his parents, even though he may rebel sometimes, because he loves them. A husband will obey his

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wife, or a wife her husband, not always because they particularly want to, but because they love each other. A similar command from someone else may well be ignored; yet even the most difficult commands will be obeyed if they are given and received in love.

For example, in our secular employment, the foreman or manager gives us an order. He is a kindly man, courteous, and always very considerate. We admire and respect him; he is always polite, a man of good principles. Immediately we obey that order without question. Subconsciously, we always want to please him; the relationship is a good one; the obedience is spontaneous and without question.

Then there is the other foreman or manager, the bullying kind, always rude, arrogant, possibly abusive, feeling his authority, a man who thinks only of himself, treating those in his charge as inferiors. We all know the type, a thoroughly unpleasant person. He gives a similar order in similar circumstances, a legitimate command, but what of our reaction? We resent his telling us what to do, and although we obey because he has authority (and we probably value our job), we do so grudgingly.

There is no difference in the order given. The circumstances are exactly the same in both cases. Both men have the authority to give that order; we are under an obligation by virtue of our employment to obey. Why, then, in the first place we are ready and willing to do as we are told without question, yet in the second case we obey only half-heartedly, our obedience tempered with a measure of resentment? We have two totally different reactions.

The answer is our attitude towards our boss. Our reaction reflects our inner feelings, our relationship. True friends always try to please each other in everything they do, but enemies seek only revenge to “put one over” on the other. A real friend finds pleasure in *giving* pleasure; an enemy finds pleasure in *denying* pleasure. We may say that we love a person; we may say that we are a friend. However, it is what we *do* that the truth of what we say is demonstrated.

Not all the commands of Jesus are easy, of course, but they are always

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given in love, although they may not always be received in love. But Jesus says, "If you love me, you will obey what I command." It is a powerful thought; it is also a sobering thought; but there is a sense in which any command of Jesus that is disobeyed is a command of the devil's obeyed. Now I know that there are those who will say that certain sins have nothing to do with the devil, but are more to do with our sinful nature, and they will quote Matthew 15:19 as an example. But think of it this way. In the beginning, sin was "introduced" to this world by the devil (see Genesis chapter 3). From the beginning of time we have always had these two opposing forces of good and evil, of righteousness and sin, and whether a particular sin is attributed directly or indirectly to the devil, it is true to say that all sin originated from him. We must not underestimate the power of the devil. He is still a mighty force to be reckoned with. But Jesus is mightier.

As our love for the Lord must be total and complete, so must our obedience to His commands. To disobey calls into question our love or, rather, whom we love. It calls into question our relationship, too. The real question is, do we love the Lord Jesus Christ enough to obey His every command?

***If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching (14:23).***

This is really a development of Jesus' previous words, reminding us that our obedience to the teachings of the Lord demonstrate our love for Him and mark out the quality of our relationship with Him. In other words, it is one thing to *say* that we love Him and another to *show* that love. For instance, it may be easy to say with the hymn-writer:

*My Jesus, I love Thee, I know Thou art mine,  
For Thee all the pleasures of sin I resign;  
My gracious Redeemer, my Saviour art Thou,  
If ever I loved Thee, my Jesus 'tis now.*

It may not be so easy to *show* that love the next time the Lord reveals His will to us, especially if it conflicts with our own ideas. That extra responsibility in the church involving a little more of our time, that Sun-

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day School class that we may have been asked to take, that simple service in the name of the Lord taking us out of the usual routine, that “extra mile” (or should it be seven?) we may be called upon to go. What of our love then?

“Action speaks louder than words” may be an old saying, but it is still very relevant today. Jesus does not want people to pay Him lip-service. What do we mean by that? Perhaps, like me, you know of people who say that they love Him and want to serve Him but who, when it really comes to the test, fail to demonstrate that love by their actions—or inaction may be a more appropriate word. How? By their disobedience or by their grudging action. When a situation calls for “love in action”, they fail to demonstrate love. Perhaps, like me, you have been guilty of such failure yourself. But God is gracious and will always forgive the failures of those who are truly repentant.

Jesus said to His disciples in that upper room, and He is still saying it to His disciples today, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching.” You see, other are watching us. There are *always* other watching us, setting higher standards for us than we are prepared to set for ourselves very often. They are waiting to see how we react to His commands, how we obey His teaching. A whole lifetime of faithful witness can be weakened, even destroyed, by our wrongful attitude towards the Lord’s commands. Someone’s faith may be shaken or even shattered by our example or lack of it. What a tremendous responsibility is ours.

At work, we can clock on and off. It may be, as we have already suggested, difficult to like the boss or to accept his orders, even though we may, as Christians, try to set a good example by displaying a measure of friendliness and obedience we may not always feel. But our Christian faith is not something we can put on and off at will; no clocking on and off for the Christian. It is a way of life, to be lived to the full every moment of every day. Whatever our attitude towards our boss in the factory or office or shop, our attitude to Jesus must be above reproach, for not only do we reveal to others our love for Him by the way we obey His teaching, but we also reveal to *ourselves* our innermost feelings, possibly with surprising revelations.

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If there was a little more love in the world today, there would be a lot less hatred. A little less hatred would result in less conflict and less conflict would bring more peace. The reality is, unfortunately, that we live in a world where peace is a rare commodity, yet amidst all this turmoil, there is peace to be found, and each one of us can sense it.

***Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not be afraid (14:27).***

In a world that is so torn with trouble, strife, war constant unrest, violence, bloodshed, hate, revenge (the list is endless), it is comforting to know that there is an inner peace available which nothing and no-one can invade or destroy, unless we let it, that is.

Jesus still says to us today, as He said to His disciples nearly two thousand years ago in that upper room, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you." Here is a positive promise demanding a positive response. Only Jesus is able to make such a promise, for He alone is the Author of that inner peace. There is no other source of lasting peace. So we can respond positively by acknowledging that peace in our soul.

But this is only the half of it. Jesus went on, "I do not give to you as the world gives." Of course, He does not. How could He? Jesus recognised then, as He does today, that we will never find true and lasting peace in this world because there is none to be found, and we must recognise that, too.

A quick glance at any newspaper or television news broadcast will prove this to be true. World leader are forever searching for peace formulas, but they search in vain, and they will continue to search in vain. Politicians promise us peace after every conflict, but their promises are hollow, even if well-intentioned, because they can never be the authors of peace.

Only in Jesus Christ will we find such peace of mind, peace of soul, a true and lasting peace in our heart, the centre of our physical and spiritual being. We may find a superficial form of peace elsewhere, but it

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will certainly not be a true and lasting peace. Only Jesus promises such a peace, and only Jesus is *able* to make that promise. How we need such a promise today.

I like the car sticker which I saw at the time of writing this section. It was almost a confirmation of what I was writing. It depicted a globe divided up like a jigsaw with one piece missing from the centre. This piece was set at the side, quite separate from the world, with the word “**Jesus**” written across it. The sticker simply said, *The missing “PEACE”*. It certainly made the point.

As Christians we do not worship a dead prophet, but a risen Saviour, a living Lord. We have no shrine to which we can trek in pilgrimage to pay homage to His bones, because there are no earthly remains ... anywhere. Jesus is alive today. That is why He is able to say to us today, “Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

It is only Jesus who is able to make this possible with His precious gift of peace. And the wonderful thing is that He is offering His gift of true and lasting peace to you and me right now. The question is, of course, are we willing to accept it, or will we continue letting our hearts be troubled, continue being afraid? At least, we have a choice.

***This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples (15:8).***

All through His earthly ministry, Jesus sought always to please His heavenly Father. Even at the age of twelve years, He was about His Father's business, the Bible tells us (Luke 2:49 *KJV*). Our responsibility as Christians is to make our example for living the one whose name we bear when we call ourselves *Christians*—The Lord Jesus *Christ*.

As an aside, it is worth mentioning here that the word actually began as a nick-name for Christ's followers. The Bible tells us that the disciples were first called Christians in the city of Antioch (Acts 11:26), where, as a result of bearing much fruit, as commanded by Jesus, they were quickly noticed by the population of the city and were readily given a

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nick-name which has come down through the centuries an honourable name. There will always be some who will disagree with that statement. They will say that the name “Christians” has been despised for wrong things done in the name of Jesus Christ. A study of secular history would seem to confirm this point as they cite the Crusades, the Inquisition, and inter-Christian strife as examples. Yet, surely, this only serves to strengthen the truth of this statement.

Using the name of Christianity, or even the name of Christ Himself, as an excuse for engaging in un-Christian activities does not sully that honourable name. The perpetrators of the un-Christian act may be very genuine in their beliefs and motives, even if totally misguided, but secular history reveals them for what they are—misguided. The name of Christian emerges as honourable as ever and is maintained down through the centuries by those countless millions of disciplined followers who, like the disciples of Antioch, bear it honourably.

Surely it is an insult to those faithful men and women who have acknowledged Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord, who have borne much fruit as He has commanded, and therefore have received the right to call themselves Christian, to be criticised by those with narrow vision who look at the few (by comparison) who have not borne the name honourably. They are way outnumbered by those who do bring honour to that name. Such criticism is totally unjustified and therefore only strengthens the truth of the statement. But what was so significant about the disciples in Antioch and the honourable name of Christian?

At first sight there is nothing very significant in those disciples receiving this name. They could have been called Christians first in Jerusalem, or Bethlehem, or even Nazareth. It is only when we realise the kind of city that Antioch really was that we begin to see the importance of the situation. It was a city of low moral standards, where idol worship was normal, where true spiritual standards virtually did not exist.

Yet here, in a sordid, depraved, degrading society, a group of people stood out sufficiently by the way they lived their lives, were recognised as being very different by their attitude toward each other, as well as

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towards others around them, that they earned for themselves this special name. It paid tribute to a people so unlike those around them as to be noticed. They were not swallowed up in the mire of immoral living. In short, they were different.

Their difference was not denominational. It was not racial. It was a quality of living, a dynamic witness, a perfect example of bearing much spiritual fruit, which, in New Testament terms, can be called *faith*. As a nick-name result of that faith, their attitude toward God, toward each other, and toward those outside their own particular community who needed Christ, was such that the Bible records that “the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” The big question now is, of course, what do people call us just where we live?

What people call us will depend to a great extent upon the amount of spiritual fruit which we bear in the place where we live. Jesus outlines our true responsibility, as evidenced by those early disciples, when He tells us that His heavenly Father is glorified when we bear much fruit, while at the same time we are showing ourselves to be His disciples. This is what His disciples did in Antioch. The only fruit that the Lord is interested in is the fruitful life, the living soul, you and me.

An orchard full of trees yielding no fruit is useless; it is not fulfilling its purpose and deserves to be cut down. Christians who fail to bear fruit, who fail to grow spiritually and so bring little or no glory to our heavenly Father as a result, who fail to tell others about the Saviour of the world, who fail to win souls, who fail to love, are equally useless to the Lord and like the trees deserve to be cut down. But God is gracious. He continues to prune, to feed, to nurture, to cultivate, exercising great care and patience.

There is another thought. Just as one fruit has many seeds capable of reproducing itself many times over, so a Christian has the capacity and responsibility to extend the Kingdom of God, to win souls, and to bear much fruit to the glory of God our heavenly Father. And so He continues to prune, to feed and nurture; a truly gracious God.

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So we are once again left with an important question: how much fruit have you and I been bearing to the glory of God this week so far? Let us be honest with our answer. Let us answer.

***You are my friends if you do what I command (15:14).***

There is a hymn which is almost as familiar outside Christian circles as it is within.

*What a friend we have in Jesus,  
All our sins and griefs to bear;  
What a privilege to carry  
Everything to God in prayer...  
Can we find a friend so faithful,  
Who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness;  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.*

Here the hymn writer is reminding us that we have a very real friend in Jesus. He should know, for these words were written as a direct result of a tragic bereavement on the eve of his wedding day, when he needed and experienced the friendship of Jesus the most. This promise became a reality. It can become a reality in our lives, perhaps in less tragic circumstances, yet equally vital to our experiences. "You are my friends," says Jesus; but, while this may be true, we must not forget that such friendship is conditional.

We will look at the conditions in a moment. For now, let us concentrate briefly on the promise and the privilege, if indeed we are privileged to have the friendship of Jesus. We need His friendship, especially in this unfriendly world in which we are forced to live, to know indeed that we have a friend upon whom we can depend completely in all circumstances. Friends like this are hard to find. Jesus is such a friend.

What makes a good friend? Someone who has our very best interest at heart. Jesus is a friend like that. Someone who cares about us, wants to encourage us, to lift us up, to comfort us when we are feeling down. Jesus

is like that. Someone who speaks kindly of us, even behind our backs, and who speaks only the truth about us, even to our face. Jesus is a friend like that.

The privilege of such friendship, based upon a divine promise, is conditional. Jesus lays down the conditions, and we must accept them, because only good can come from our obedience. After all, true friendship seeks only the good and best among friends. I am glad that Jesus is a friend of mine and that I am His friend. I trust that you, too, are a friend of His.

But what about the conditions? Jesus said, “You are my friends if you do what I command.” That word “if” is important, the little word with the big meaning, is how it has often been described. That is what makes His friendship conditional. So just what does He command?

***This is my command: love each other (15:17)***

Jesus never leaves us in doubt as to His commands. “Love each other,” He says here. This is simple and plain enough. But as is so often the case, the *meaning* behind the command is not always as simple as it first appears. Jesus had already dealt with this earlier in His discourse when He said, “Love one another” (13:34). He also referred to His disciples as “my children” (13:33). So in dealing once again, albeit very briefly, with this condition for experiencing the friendship of Jesus, we bring together these two phrases.

As we said earlier in this booklet, this may be a new command to love one another, but it is also a very difficult command. Therefore we need all the help we can get to enable us to obey, especially as there is a condition attached to it. We need the friendship of Jesus; we can have that friendship *only* if we love one another, other believers in Christ, because He loves them all. Many years after Jesus had used these two phrases, John brought them together in one of his epistles. It is possible that he had the words of Jesus in mind when he penned this advice.

“Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth” (1 John 3:18). We must never be too *big* or feel too *important*,

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or yet think that we are too old, either in years or in the faith, or too experienced, to allow God to treat us, to speak to us, and to regard us as His “dear children”. This verse refers to John’s speaking to the “brethren”, but, because it is in the Bible, today it is God speaking to us as His children, and we take it to assist us in obeying the command of Jesus to “love each other”.

It is comparatively easy to *say* that we love; it is not so easy to *show* that love. Remember the brother who said he could not like all the members of his church, but he had to love them for Christ’s sake. No doubt he recognised that we are Christ’s friends only if we obey the command to love other believers. Action speaks louder than words. Our love for others, our fellow believers, reflects our true love for God. It is not enough to say, “I love You, Lord.” We must show that love by our actions, in deed and truth, as the *King James Version* puts it. We should be prepared to go where He wants us to go, do what He wants us to do, serve as He wants us to serve, and obey His will for us—and not the other way round as so often happens!

This brings us full circle. If we really do love Him and show that we do, then there will be no difficulties, no problems, no barriers, when He treats us and speaks to us as His “dear children”; for by our “loving in truth”, not just “with words or tongue”, we acknowledge Him as our heavenly Father and ourselves as His “dear children”. It will make a difference in our love for others, too, especially fellow believers.

So here is the help which we need to obey the command of Jesus to “love each other”, with the promise that we are His friends if we are obedient. This may not be easy, but it is necessary.

***He who hates me hates my Father as well (15:23).***

Strong words, you might say, and you could be right. From speaking of friendship and love, Jesus now moves to the opposite end of the scale and speaks about hate. But this Bible verse has far more to say to us than just that. Behind all the words spoken by Jesus, not only in the upper room, or whilst He was walking the earth, but also the words spo-

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ken as the risen, ascended and glorified Christ through His disciples recorded in the New Testament, behind all His words there is a wealth of meaning worthy of consideration. Something, I trust, we have already discovered in these pages.

We are not altering the truth of Scripture in any way if we take these words of Jesus and add, “He who loves Jesus loves His Father as well,” or, “who serves Jesus serves His Father as well,” or, yet again, “He who worships Jesus worships His Father as well.” In fact, we could go on adding many things to the list, each of which would illustrate the underlying truth that Jesus is trying to teach us here, that He and His Father are One.

Indeed, as Jesus Himself had said earlier to the Jews in Solomon’s Colonnade in the Temple, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). So what was Jesus really saying to His disciples in that upper room? What is He saying to His disciples today? Already we have discovered that, when we fail to obey Christ’s command to love other believers, to love one another, we risk the danger of losing His divine friendship. Now He is taking it a stage further.

Look again. When we fail to obey Jesus and fail to love other believers, we risk losing His friendship, and now we realise that in so doing we are also failing to obey our heavenly Father and thereby risk losing His friendship, too. One of those commands is to love; it is generally accepted that the opposite emotion is to hate—the word used here by Jesus. So, if by disobedience we fail to show love, whether it is to fellow believers, to those less fortunate than ourselves, to the unlovable, the unlovely, then there is a sense in which we display the opposite emotion—hatred towards others, towards Jesus Himself, and now towards our heavenly Father.

As Jesus says, “He who hates me hates my Father as well.” That is plain and simple enough. We did say that behind the words of Jesus there is always a wealth of meaning; here is something worthy of consideration. If our hearts and lives are filled with love then there is no room for hate. Perhaps the words of Jesus here concerning hate are not as strong as at first we thought.

***It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you” (16:7).***

The Counsellor, or Comforter, as the *KJV* calls Him, is actually another name for the Holy Spirit. It is extremely important that we should not isolate the Spirit from the Godhead, as some unfortunately tend to do these days, creating the impression that He is above the Father and the Son. Nor should we try to separate Him from Jesus, who is telling us quite plainly here that but for Him the Holy Spirit would not be available to us.

This is also true the other way round. Without the Holy Spirit, Jesus would not be available to the world today. Jesus is no longer with us in the flesh, but He is very much present with us through His Spirit. Indeed, it was Jesus Himself who sent the Holy Spirit, as He promised—He is ever faithful to His promises.

What did Jesus really mean when He said to His disciples, “It is for your good that I am going away”? Why was it so important that Jesus should go away? How could it be for the good of the disciples? Jesus Himself gave the answer. “Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but, if I go, I will send Him to you,” He said, and for a very good reason, too.

In the flesh, Jesus was restricted to only a few, both in time and place. Through His Spirit, He is now available to the whole world in every age until the end of time, giving us His love, His friendship, His companionship, His guidance, His peace. All those are worth more than we realise these days. So this is the reason why we acknowledge and worship the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—because the Father sent the Son, the Son sent the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit makes the Father and the Son available to us all, at all times, and in all places.

***I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name (16:23).***

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Sometimes we come upon a verse of Scripture which is really difficult to understand, because what it states seems to be impossible. With these words of Jesus, we have one such example. Our heavenly Father will give us whatever we ask, providing that we ask in the name of Jesus. Can this really be true? Yet, if Jesus said it, it must be true.

Although it seems impossible, and therefore very difficult to accept, if I were to ask for a million pounds or two million dollars, in the name of Jesus, would I receive it from God the Father? Somehow, I cannot see it happening just like that. Can you? But surely this is what Jesus is saying. No! To think like this is to misunderstand totally the meaning of these words of Jesus.

If our children were to ask for things which would not be helpful to them or even positively harmful, a loving and caring parent would refuse even the most apparently logical request. Our children may not agree with our decision; they may even argue with us; but, if we refuse out of love, then it would be right to do so, no matter the disagreement or the argument. As parents, we have a duty and a responsibility which do not always meet with the approval of our children.

I well remember my own son, now a man in middle years, saying to me when he was about four years old, when I had refused what was to him a perfectly legitimate request, "You are the worstest daddy in the world." He reminded me of this incident recently after well over twenty-five years. [That was over ten years ago, so it is now well over thirty-five years since this incident.] Neither of us could remember what the request was, but what he said to me was significant: "You know, Dad, whatever it was, you were right." [He has since confessed to me, now that he has a teenage daughter of his own, that he is even more sure that I was right all those years ago!]

We can be sure that our heavenly Father is always right. He accepts to the full His duty and divine responsibility for each of us, for we are His children. Anything we ask for in the name of Jesus He will give us if it is right and proper for our good, if it is not harmful to our spiritual well-

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being, if our motive for asking is not rooted in selfishness and greed. (I suspect that my request for millions of pounds or dollars would fall into this last category.)

If, on the other hand, only harm would result, and God is the One to decide if it would, then He will refuse our request. While it is natural for us as children to ask from time to time, just as with an earthly parent, we must realise that the duty and responsibility for giving rests with our heavenly Father, and that is something we should fully understand. Of course, this should not discourage us from asking, although sometimes we appear to be reluctant to make our requests known. Jesus recognises this reluctance.

***Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask, and you will receive (16:24).***

Why, then, are we reluctant sometimes to ask God for the help we need, when His word especially invites us to come to Him for this purpose? We miss out on a lot of spiritual joy when we fail to ask. Perhaps it is because we do not like to admit that we are in need. It certainly takes courage, for it is not easy to admit defeat, but the time comes to us all when we fail, when we need help, when we need to ask, and God is always there waiting to answer our call.

Maybe asking is just too much trouble on our part. So often the attitude today is, "I just can't be bothered," or, "I couldn't care less." Asking demands too much spiritual energy. It demands spiritual honesty, too, for we have to come to God "in my name"; and to see ourselves in the light of Jesus' lovely face may cause us to react as Isaiah did in the presence of God: "Woe to me! I cried. I am ruined ... my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty" (Isaiah 6:5).

There may be a lack of confidence, yet there is no need, for God has promised to those who ask that they will receive (Matthew 7:8). Whatever the reason for our reluctance to ask, let us turn from it, realising what spiritual joy we are missing, and then remember what Jesus said to His disciples in the upper room: 'I tell you the truth, my Father will give you

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whatever you ask in My name' (16:23). 'I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask for anything in My name, and I will do it' (14:13,14).

If Jesus is saying to us at this moment, as He said to His disciples all those years ago, 'Until now you have not asked anything in My name,' then let us remember that there is a right way to ask and there must be a right motive. But above all we should notice that Jesus also says: 'Ask, and you will receive,' so let us not be reluctant, but ask and keep on asking.

However, a note of caution should be sounded! Jesus said, '*whatever* you ask in my name,' and, '*anything* in my name.' These are two very precious promises, but a review of our own experience together with a careful study of the Scriptures makes it clear that such promises were limited, and still are. They are limited in scope, in time, and to certain people. They do not give us *carte blanche*, not even to those to whom they were first said. We are told in Paul's epistles to pray for whatever we like (Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:6). Nevertheless, we are not promised that we will receive all that we ask. As we have already said, there may be occasions when our prayers of asking appear not to be answered, even though we should recognise that 'no' is still an answer.

In attempting to apply these promises to all believers since Christ's day, Michael Penny, writing in *Search Magazine* (No. 31, April/May 1989), says:

'I am inclined to the view that this was a very dispensational passage, being true of the twelve and their associates during the period covered by the Acts of the Apostles. Recognising the limitations on *whatever* and *anything*, there are some outstanding answers to prayer in the Acts period and so one can see that the promise was fulfilled.

'However, it can be argued that prayer is not dispensational, for all God's people of all ages and dispensations are encouraged to pray to Him. That is most certainly true, but although prayer itself is not dispensational the subject matter may be.

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There are many things that all God's people of all ages should pray for, but there are some things which may have been appropriate for the Israelites in the wilderness or for the disciples during Acts which are not appropriate for us.'

He then concludes:

'It could well be that there is a valid application for all believers since Christ's day. If those of the Acts period asked for what Christ would have asked for if He had been there, then their prayers would have been answered.

If we, today, ask for what Christ would ask for if He was here, then our prayers will be answered. Of course it may be that today Christ would want something different to what He would have wanted during Acts.'

***In this world you will have trouble. But take heart. I have overcome the world (16:33).***

The Christian has never been promised an easy and smooth pathway through life. Jesus made that quite plain to His disciples in the upper room. He makes it equally plain to us today wherever we are. But, while He has told us that in this world we will have trouble, He did not stop there. He tells us to take heart because He has overcome the world. For the Christian, that is good news indeed, although we must avail ourselves of its benefits if we are to experience this good news at first hand.

The prince of this world is the devil. He is still a mighty force to be reckoned with; make no mistake about that. This is obvious when we see all the evil things that are happening in the world today. He will certainly make sure that our pathway is anything but easy and definitely not smooth. We really must not underestimate his power. His aim is to make life as difficult as possible for the disciples of Jesus.

We are not encouraged to pray for a smooth and pleasant pathway through life. Indeed such a prayer would be improper in the light of what Jesus is telling His disciples here. It is just a thought, and I believe a very valid one, that if our life is constantly smooth, with never a problem,

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never a difficulty, never a fear or frustration, with absolute and perfect tranquillity every moment of every day, year after year, this is a sign that the devil is not troubling us. We should think for a moment of the implications of that!

Christians do suffer. There is no doubt about that. We are not immune. It is very comforting, then, to know that we do not have to face our problems and difficulties alone, nor can those problems and difficulties overcome us completely. How do we know? Because Jesus has promised to be with us to the end of the world and has Himself overcome the world. So we can be of good cheer (as the *KJV* renders this phrase) we can take heart, come what may.

The hymn writer, Fannie Joliffe, has helped me to get this whole matter into proper perspective, encouraging valid prayer. I trust that this hymn will help you, too.

*I do not ask Thee, Lord,  
That all my life may be  
An easy, smooth and pleasant path;  
'Twould not be good for me.  
But O I ask today  
That grace and strength be given  
To keep me fighting all the way  
That leads to God and Heaven!*

*I do not ask Thee, Lord,  
That tears may never flow,  
Or that the world may always smile  
Upon me as I go.  
From Thee fell drops of blood;  
A thorn-crown pressed Thy brow;  
Thy suffering brought Thee victory then,  
And Thou canst help me now.*

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*And what if strength should fail,  
And heart more deeply bleed?  
Or what if dark and lonely days  
Draw forth the cry of need?  
That cry will bring Thee down  
My needy soul to fill,  
And Thou wilt teach my yearning heart  
To know and do Thy will.*

But, yes, there is always a ‘but’. This promise is conditional. All the words spoken by Jesus are important; we cannot divorce them from each other (even though we are taking only a selected few here from the total spoken in the upper room). Providing, then, that we maintain our relationship with Jesus, obey His words, demonstrate our love for each other and for Him, keep His friendship, and these provisions in no way exhaust the list, the world may trouble us, but it will not conquer us. Jesus will see to that because He alone has overcome the world. ‘That cry will bring Thee down my needy soul to fill’. So take heart.

***Father, time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him (17:1,2).***

Now the scene changes slightly in that upper room. From speaking to His disciples, Jesus now turns to speaking to His Father. It is a powerful prayer, full of meaning; it is a prayer specifically for His disciples. Space will permit only a very brief look at this prayer to conclude our meditations in this booklet, but in so doing there is something very important for us all to bear in mind.

When Jesus began to pray for His disciples (17:6-19), it was not for the eleven alone. It was for all disciples, everywhere in every age (17:20-26). A disciple is a disciplined follower, and a follower of Christ, accepting His teaching, is called a Christian. A Christian, therefore, is a disciple of Jesus Christ. It takes only simple logic to realise that Jesus is here praying for us, for you and me.

One of the greatest gifts possessed by the Christian is eternal life. A non-Christian does not have this gift. I know that this is very plain speaking, bordering on the dogmatic, but it is a fact if the Bible is to be believed, and we sometimes have to face facts. What makes the difference, you may ask? The answer can be given in one word, a word which we have meditated on before in these pages, *relationship*. The gift of eternal life is available only from the true God through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

As Jesus continued in His prayer to His Father (and let us not lose sight of the fact that God is our heavenly Father, too), He acknowledged that the Father had granted Him authority over all the people so that He might give this gift of eternal life to all those whom God had given to Him. This statement is plain enough. Why does man sometimes try to complicate it? Providing that our relationship is right, then we can be certain of those gifts.

Indeed, if Jesus had not intended us to have this wonderful gift, He would not have prayed for our relationship with Him in the first place. We acknowledge Him as our Saviour and Lord; we are sure of that relationship; we believe that we are a disciple of Jesus Christ; we are certain that we are a child of God; we know that we have the gift of eternal life. Now that is being positive, and that is what is sadly lacking sometimes in this world today, in the church especially—positive faith.

***They are not of the world, even as I am not of it (17:16).***

Some of the simplest statements are the most powerful. We have said this before in these pages. Here is an example. Jesus was referring to His disciples when He prayed this prayer to His heavenly Father. It is part of a much longer prayer on this particular subject, of course. Let us remember that a disciple is a disciplined follower, that a follower of Jesus Christ is a Christian, and that a Christian is a disciple of Jesus Christ. Why do we remind ourselves of these facts? Because they have a distinct bearing upon this simple statement.

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Basically, there are two kinds of people in this world (as we are thinking of it here), irrespective of race, class, or colour of skin. There are those who are *of* the world, who live their lives according to the standards of the world. And there are those who are *in* the world, but not *of* it, who live by a very different set of standards.

It is obvious that a person who becomes a Christian and starts to live by heavenly standards cannot be immediately taken out of the world, or there would be no-one left to tell the others about Jesus Christ and His Gospel. As Jesus said of His disciples, including present-day disciples, you and me, 'They are not of the world'. Naturally we must live *in* the world, but we must not be *of* the world. May we never forget that for the Christian this world is just a temporary home; our eternal home is in Heaven. 'I'm but a stranger here; Heaven is my home,' as one writer has put it.

It is by Heaven's standards that the Christian lives in this world. It is also our responsibility to do all in our power to bring others home to God, while continuing to live in the world. This dual citizenship is not easy, and in our own strength it is impossible. That is why the second half of this simple statement is so important and what makes it so powerful. We have Jesus to help us, because He is not of this world either. That is the reason why He is able to help us, and *will* help us if we let Him.

***I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one (17:22).***

How important it is for the sake of peace and harmony that people be at one with each other. It may be people of two great nations, or it may simply be between two individuals such as a man and his wife. Dare we say it? It may even be between two church fellowships, which, sadly, is not always apparent. Yet this 'one-ness' between believers is the theme of Jesus' discourse in the upper room. Where there is not this 'one-ness', there is conflict. We cannot hide the fact that there is much conflict in the world today. No sector of society seems to be without it, and sad though it may be, this includes church fellowships, and more specifically individual believers. This is not God's way.

We are continually reminded through the Scriptures that one of our aims as true Christians should be the same as that of Jesus Christ Himself, to glorify God our heavenly Father. There is no glory in conflict. That is why Jesus prayed as He did, that He had given to His disciples the glory that God had given Him, so that we (because we, too, are included in this prayer) may be one with each other as Jesus is One with His Father. This 'one-ness' is very important.

Jesus was one in His aims and purposes, and both are to bring glory to God the Father. We, too, must bring glory to God. This must be our aim and purpose, by the way we live our lives. The greatest glory we can bring to God our Father is by our being at one with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and above all, by being at one with each other, because this automatically makes us at one with God the Father.

### ***Conclusion***

While in this small booklet we have looked at only a few of the things Jesus said towards the end of His earthly ministry, *every* word that He spoke is important and is worthy of very careful consideration. That is why we repeat here the suggestion made at the beginning of this booklet that maximum benefit will be obtained if the text from the latter half of chapter thirteen to the end of chapter seventeen of St. John's Gospel be read in full, rather than confine ourselves to just the selected few verses taken here.

However, we take the suggestion a stage further. It is vitally important that we give careful consideration to *all* that the Lord has said, and is saying, to us, His disciples. The word 'all' is significant, because by it we mean not only the words of Jesus who walked this earth, but also those of the ascended, risen and glorified Christ. We must recognise that what Jesus said through His apostles during the Acts, and especially what He said through Paul for the Gentiles, is equally important as that spoken by Him as the servant to the Jews, said to the Jews under the law in Judaea.

## In My Father's House

If the selected verses taken in this booklet encourage us to study further *every* word which Jesus spoke, both from His own lips and through the writings of His Apostles, making us realise more and more the importance of His words, then the purpose of this brief devotional meditation has been well and truly served; especially if some of the treasures and untold riches have been revealed as well, stored up for us ***in my Father's house.***

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