

'The World, the Disciples and the Holy spirit.'

Ch. 15:18-16:33 (Keswick Convention 1973)

by Eric J. Alexander

The sermon explores the relationship between the Christian and the world, and the role of the Holy Spirit in convicting the world of its sin, the necessity of righteousness, and the reality of judgment.

Duration: 1:00:20

Scripture: John 15:18

Topics: "Disciples", "Witnessing in a Hostile World", "The Role of the Holy Spirit"

Description

Eric J. Alexander emphasizes the relationships between the world, the disciples, and the Holy Spirit, explaining how Christians are chosen out of the world yet sent back into it as witnesses. He highlights the Holy Spirit's role in convicting the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, while also providing understanding and joy to believers amidst tribulation. Alexander reassures that through Christ's sacrifice, believers have direct access to the Father and can find peace despite worldly challenges, as Jesus has overcome the world. The sermon encourages Christians to embrace their identity and mission in a hostile world, relying on the Holy Spirit for strength and guidance.

Transcript

to the end of verse 11, it is the relationship between the world and the Holy Spirit. Then from verse 12 of chapter 16 to the end of verse 15, it is the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Christian. There are these three relationships then, the Christian and the world, 18 of chapter 15 to the end of 6 of 16.

The world and the Holy Spirit, verses 7 to 11, and the Holy Spirit and the Christian, verses 12 to 15. Then from chapter 16, verse 16 to the end of the chapter, Jesus outlines some of the blessings, which will be the fruit of His going and the Spirit's coming. And they are, first, joy out of sorrow, the end of verse 20 is the keynote, your sorrow will be turned into joy.

Then secondly, understanding out of perplexity, and verse 23 is the keynote, in that day you will ask me no questions. And finally, triumph in tribulation, verse 33 is the keynote, I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace, in the world you have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. There then is the outline of our study for this morning, and it will, you may be guessing, a triumph of grace if we get to the end of it by 11 o'clock.

Perhaps it might be helpful to notice our Lord's own explanation in chapter 16, verse 1, of His purpose in all this teaching. I have to keep reminding myself, and I hope I may remind you, that the whole substance and point of our Lord's teaching in these chapters, is that He might succor and buttress the disciples in their weakness and need, as they face this horrifying prospect of the departure of the Lord Jesus from them. And Jesus says in chapter 16, verse 1, I have said all this to you, and it is the whole of this upper room discourse I think that He is referring to, to keep you from falling away.

That's our Lord's great burden, for the security of His people. And the truth enshrined in that explanation is that it is the ministry of His word that keeps us from falling. I have said these things to you, to keep you from falling away.

Well now may we look at the first of these relationships, verse 18 of chapter 15 to verse 6 of chapter 16, the Christian and the world. If the world hates you, you know that it has hated me before it hated you. Now it's important to notice that the context in which Jesus begins to expound to the disciples, what will be the relationship between themselves and the world, is the life of fruit bearing, of which He has been speaking in the earlier part of the chapter.

And the point is that this life of fruit bearing and of fellowship with the Father and the Son, is not just to be lived out in the context of the mutual love of believers. It is to be lived out in the context of a secular society, which is fundamentally hostile to the fruit bearing Christian. That is what Jesus means by the world.

There are various usages of the phrase the world in the scripture, but here and in so many places in John's writings it is society as alienated from God, and under the sway of Satan as its prince. And it is within the context of this secular society as we would say, that the life of the fruit bearing child of God is to be lived. The position of the Christian in relation to the world, you will notice in these early verses of this part, is a threefold relationship.

First of all in verse 19, He has been chosen out of the world. You are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world. Secondly, because of this He is therefore not of the world, that is He does not belong to it.

If you were of the world, the world would love its own. And the counterpart of belonging to Christ, and belonging to the vine, is that you do not belong to the world. He is not of the world.

But the third relationship He has to the world is that He is a witness to the world. He is chosen out of it, He is not of it, but that does not mean that He lives in isolation. He is sent back into it by the same Lord who has chosen Him out of it.

And in verse 27 Jesus says, you also are witnesses because you have been with me from the beginning. Now it's because of what Jesus has done in them, when He chose them out of the world, that the world is hostile to them, when He sends them back into it. I wonder if you know that wonderful fairy story.

I hope you haven't stopped reading fairy stories, incidentally. There is a wealth of theology in fairy stories. Have you ever grasped this? C.S. Lewis is the great man who has discovered this.

There is that wonderful old fairy story of the animal taken out of the herd by a being from another world. And this being ennobles and beautifies the animal until it radiates some kind of strange new glory. And then it returns to the herd.

And at first they are curious and intrigued, wondering what this is that's happened to this member of their herd. And then the curiosity and intrigue turns to resentment and anger until the whole place becomes a cauldron of hatred. And they turn upon it to rend it to pieces.

They hate the glory that's shining from it. Now there's a world of theology in that kind of fairy story. It is because of what He has done in them, when He chose them out of the world, that the world is hostile to them when they stand in it.

Says Jesus, the world hates you. And in these verses, 18 and 19 onwards, this hatred is related to Christ in two ways. First of all, the world hates the Christian as it hated Christ.

In verse 18, if the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. That is, His relationship with the world is the pattern or prototype of their experience with the world. How did the world treat Jesus? Well, you see that supremely, of course, at the cross.

The cross is the great revelation of all these things. How did they treat Jesus then? With indifference, you remember. With cynical indifference, they gambled at the foot of the cross while He suffered.

With contempt, if thou be the Christ, come down from the cross. With mockery, hail King of the Jews. With hatred and violence, they spat upon Him and took the reed and smote Him.

Now, if they do that with me, says Jesus, don't be surprised if they do the same with you. Verse 20, a servant is not greater than his master. But notice also that the world hates the Christian not only as it hated Christ, but because it hated Christ.

Verse 21, all this they will do to you on my account. Verse 19, if you look back, if you were of the world, the world would love its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

That is, his relationship with the world is not only the pattern and prototype of theirs, it is the reason for the world's hatred of them. Now that's an important truth for us as we think of the relationship of the Christian with the world. It is not, in other words, our oddities and inconsistencies which are to draw upon us the world's opposition.

It is our Christ-likeness and holiness which is the real motive of the world's opposition. And it is a grievous error, beloved, when a man blames opposition that he is receiving upon his relationship with the Lord, when really it is the result of the inconsistencies of his own life. You may not blame on the Lord Jesus some of the objectionable things that are in your own life that may draw down the opposition of the world.

Further Jesus says you can trace this hatred still deeper. They hate you because they hate me, verse 21. But in verse 22 there is a strong hint of the fact that they hate me really because they hate my father.

If I had not come and spoken to them they would not have sinned, but now they have no excuse for their sin. Verse 23, he who hates me hates my father also. That's something that Christian people need to learn, is it not? That the natural man, nice and upright though he may be, is at heart implacably opposed to God.

So that when a man says to you, oh I have nothing against God and all that, he doesn't know himself, beloved. The natural man is implacably opposed to God and to his son and to the whole message of the

gospel. And once that reality is opened to his eyes, the hatred begins to come out of the heart of the natural man.

This is something very real. Further Jesus says they hate both you and me and my father because of their spiritual blindness and ignorance. Verses 21 to 25, all this they will do to you on my account because they do not know him who sent me.

If I had not come and spoken to them they would not have sinned, but now they have no excuse for their sin. You will notice that this is willful ignorance that Jesus is speaking of. It's not that they have not heard, but that they will not listen.

Therefore they are without excuse. Now throughout the scripture you get illustrations of that kind of thing. Do you remember the experience of Stephen in Acts chapter 7? When he is witnessing to the world of the Lord Jesus Christ and has been preaching Christ in all the scriptures to them.

Verse 54 of Acts 7, when they heard these things they were enraged and ground their teeth against him. That was the hatred of the world against God. And when Stephen went on to speak in verse 57 we read, They cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together upon him.

Can you see the picture of these men? They say we don't want to listen, we don't want to hear this. It is a willful ignorance. Now it's very significant that Jesus extends this hatred of the world which the believer will suffer to the realm of worldly religion.

In chapter 16 verses 1 to 4, I have said all this to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed the hour is coming when whosoever kills you will think he is offering service to God.

Now that prophecy was very literally fulfilled you will remember in the persecuting zeal of Saul of Tarsus. Giving his own account of it in Acts 22 verse 3 following Paul says, He was zealous for God. And in Acts 26 verse 9, I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Now here is another realm you see of the opposition of the world and it's the opposition of worldly religion to the real Jesus in the lives of his disciples. And I want to say to you my Christian friends this morning that one of the most frightening things in all the world is to see the naked hatred of worldly religion for the real Jesus in the lives of his children. And whether that worldly religion wears liberal clothes or evangelical clothes doesn't matter.

I was at a conference somewhere some time ago and I met a young man who came to see me in great distress. He was the pastor of a certain congregation and he began to tell me about this evangelical congregation that he had come to. But it had been an evangelical congregation that had been resting upon its laurels and had never been used to being disturbed out of the word of God.

And he began to tell me about some of the things that had happened to him. About some of the experiences he had had with office bearers in that very congregation. And do you know what had happened to that young man? They had brought him to the verge of a mental breakdown.

What was it? Well it was because under this awful diabolical delusion that they were serving God they were hounding the young man out of the place. And there is a worldliness even in evangelical religion

which can produce a demonic hatred of the real Jesus. But all that is the negative side of the relation of the Christian in the world.

What is the Christian to do in response to the world's hatred? Well Jesus answer comes in the context of his words about the ministry of the Holy Spirit in verse 26 and 27. What the Christian is to do is to go into the world sent by the Lord Jesus and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be witnesses. You also are witnesses because you have been with me from the beginning.

So the Christian's response to the world's hostility to God and to the gospel is neither to be isolation nor retaliation but evangelization. And that is the bridge into the next section of the chapter because you will notice in verse 26 that behind the witness of the disciple is the witness of the Holy Spirit. This is why Jesus is sending the Holy Spirit.

It is he who will be the witness and you also are witnesses. I shall send to you the counselor from the Father even the Spirit of truth and he will bear witness to me. Now this is what Peter and the Apostles are testifying to in Acts 5.32 when they say we are his witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Spirit.

And the same Lord Jesus who took them out of the world to himself and incorporated them into the vine so that they were not of the world sends them back into the world as his fruitful and fruit bearing disciples to bear witness to the world as the instruments of the Holy Spirit. You see God's attitude to the world is not that he stands back from it when he sees the hostility and the rebellion of those who did not like to retain God in their knowledge. They worshipped and served the creature rather than the creator.

What does God do? He doesn't wash his hands of it and go to some corner and leave them to themselves. He loved the world and sent his own the begotten Son and part of that loving and sending is that the Lord Jesus says he is sending you out into the world equipped by his Holy Spirit to be his witness. And the book of Acts is really the account of the fulfillment of that promise.

It is the story of how the Holy Spirit takes up these poor weak frightened men fills them with power from on high and bears witness to the Lord Jesus through them. Now it's that that brings us to the second relationship the world and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit bears witness to Christ but he does not only conduct Christ's case before the world to use Dr. Leon Morris's phrase although this is the first element in the Holy Spirit's witness.

You will remember that the word paraclete which is the word John uses for the Holy Spirit has these legal overtones and the normal idea used of the Holy Spirit's work for the believer in the word paraclete is that he is the one called alongside to buttress the believer and to indwell him and then to witness to the world concerning Christ. But here in John 16 verse 11 he appears to become the in verses 6 to 11 I'm sorry he appears to become not so much the advocate to conduct Christ's case before the world but rather the prosecutor who secures the world's conviction. You notice nevertheless verse 7 I tell you the truth it is to your advantage that I go away but if I do not go away the counselor will not come to you but if I go I will send him to you and what will he do? When he comes he will convince the world or as the authorized version puts it he will convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment.

Now this is the Holy Spirit's ministry as the prosecutor as it were to secure conviction in the world. In witnessing to the world the Holy Spirit is giving evidence. In convicting the world the Holy Spirit is securing a conviction and in both cases it is through the believer that he works.

Now specifically he convicts the world of three things concerning which it is either heedless or ignorant. One the solemnity of sin. He will convict the world of sin.

Verse 9 because they do not believe in me. Verse 10 he will convict the world of the necessity of righteousness. Of righteousness because I go to the Father and you will see me no more.

And thirdly he will convict the world of the reality of judgment. So there are the three areas in which the Holy Spirit comes to the world acting as it were as a prosecutor. Now you see the great thing that the believer can never do by himself in the world is produce this sense of conviction.

Bring to the world the sense of the reality of God. The solemnity of sin. The necessity of righteousness.

The certainty of judgment. That's the thing that you can never persuade the world of. You can argue men blue in the face.

You can be the most brilliant intellectual in the world and you'll never bring that kind of conviction to the world because it's the exclusive ministry of the Holy Spirit of God. And this is why Jesus says it will be to your advantage that I go away. I will send the Holy Spirit not only because it will be to their personal advantage he will come to indwell them.

It will be the beginning of the ministry which will take this hostile world and bring it to see it's sin. Now let's look at these three things that Jesus says the Holy Spirit will do. I take this to mean the Holy Spirit convicts the world of the solemnity of sin in verse 9 and the evidence that he uses to secure this conviction is the evidence of unbelief.

Of sin because they do not believe in me. Now the Greek usage probably does not mean that sin consists in unbelief but rather as Dr. Leon Morris suggests that unbelief is a classic illustration of sin. Let me quote his words to you.

The basic sin is the sin which puts self at the center of things and consequently refuses to believe. This is the world's characteristic sin and it received classic expression when God sent his son into the world and the world refused to believe in him. Now it is the solemnity of this sin which only the Holy Spirit can drive home to the conscience and stab it awake.

And this is what you see happening again in the book of Acts. It's a glorious thing to see how the Lord Jesus has all these promises laid before the disciples and in Acts they are fulfilled. In Philippi for example.

I had the great privilege of standing in Philippi in the ruins of Paul's prison last August in Greece and I could almost hear the cries of that man as the earthquake came and the prison came clattering down round about him and he began to discover that the message of these men who had been preaching was something more than idle old wild fables. He began to see that there was a living God. He began to discover that sin was a black reality and he cries out, What must I do to be saved, sirs? Now that's the Holy Spirit coming to convict the world of the solemnity of sin.

And you see this happening not only in the book of Acts. You see it happening in the great revivals. Isn't this what happens when the Spirit of God comes down upon a community? That men and women who lived lightly to sin, who joked about it probably, who practiced it apparently with impunity, they come to discover the gravity and the reality of sin.

Oh, you need to read the story of revival to see something of this. Dr. Edwin Orr in his great book, *The Second Evangelical Awakening*, describes at one point how the Spirit of God came down upon that little fishing town of Selardyke on the east coast of Scotland in 1860. Let me read you his account of one part of it.

He says, On March the 12th, 1860, a young man under deep conviction went out to sea to fish. After three days of struggle, he finally appropriated salvation in Christ. The Christian skipper saw in the event the beginning of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the community.

With the return of the ship and the testimony of the young man, hundreds of people in Selardyke became burdened by sin. They sent for their ministers before whom they gave way to tears. Three hundred adult inquirers were dealt with in this period, and an army officer of high rank summed up his impressions of what he had seen in Selardyke like this.

Now listen to this. Those of you who are at ease have little conception of how terrifying a sight it is when the Holy Spirit is pleased to open a man's eyes to see the real state of his heart. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of the solemnity of sin.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit convicts the world, in verse 10, of righteousness. And I take this to be the necessity of righteousness. The righteousness of which Jesus speaks, I would understand to be that righteousness which God demands, which man lacks, and which Christ alone provides.

And Jesus points us to this in the phrase he uses of righteousness, because I go to the Father and you will see me no more. His going to the Father is his atoning work, whereby that righteousness which man does not have is provided in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now this is the Holy Spirit's convicting ministry.

When men become aware of this, you see, what happens is similar to what happened in the day of Pentecost. When the Word of God was preached and the glory of God was seen in what he had done in the Lord Jesus Christ, and they are cut to the heart. And he finds himself saying, God is a God who demands righteousness.

And I look into my heart and find I do not have righteousness. All my righteousnesses are as filthy rags. And he cries out as they did to Peter on that day, men and brethren, what shall we do? And the Holy Spirit will say, put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. The Holy Spirit will convict the world of righteousness because I go to the Father. Thirdly, the Holy Spirit convicts the world of the reality of judgment.

Of judgment because the ruler of this world is judged, verse 11. And he does so by revealing to the world the fate of its prince. One of the great significances, you see, of Christ's saving work is that it is a triumph over Satan.

In Colossians chapter 2, verse 15, Paul speaks of Christ's work on the cross in this way. He says, he disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in his judgment. And here Jesus speaks of it as the harbinger and forerunner of the final judgment.

And Sir Edwin Hoskins comments, the dethronement of the devil must be exposed to the world and become one of the themes of the apostolic preaching. Well, now there is the ministry of the Holy Spirit in

the world. He convicts the world of the seriousness of sin, of the necessity of righteousness and of the reality of judgment.

Now Martin Luther preaching on this comes to the end of verse 11 and says, Now do I hear someone ask. Martin Luther is always hearing somebody asking questions. And conveniently they're always the questions he just wants to answer.

And at this point he says, do I hear someone ask, by what means will God perform this convicting work? And he says, I answer, by sending the Spirit into the hearts of his children. You will notice this in verse 7 of chapter 16 at the end. If I go, I will send him to you.

And when he comes, that is when he comes to you, he will convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment. So that it is the Holy Spirit's work to convict the world through Spirit-filled and Spirit-anointed men and women. Now in verses 12 to 15 from the Spirit's work in the world, our Lord turns to the Spirit's work in the disciples.

I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. Let me remind you of what our Lord has already taught us about the Holy Spirit's ministry in the believer in these chapters.

They are troubled in heart because they are to be bereft of Jesus' physical presence. But Jesus tells them that it will actually be to their advantage when he is glorified. They would have kept him back, you see.

They would have said to him, Lord you mustn't go away. But Jesus says, I have a far better plan than that. The Holy Spirit, the other paraclete, will not just be with you.

He will be everything Jesus was to them. Only he will be in you. And he will continue this teaching ministry.

And here in verses 12 to 15, it's the Holy Spirit's teaching ministry on which Jesus lays emphasis. They are not in a position at this moment to receive so much of what he wants to say to them. But the Holy Spirit will exercise a ministry of instruction and illumination.

He will guide you into all the truth. He will declare the things that are to come. That may well mean that the Holy Spirit is going to teach and instruct the disciples on the significance of the death and resurrection and ascension and return of the Lord Jesus.

Now it seems to me important to distinguish between the fulfillment of that promise of Jesus to the apostles and its fulfillment to believers in future generations. He will guide you into all the truth. He will declare to you things that are to come.

And I would put the distinction this way. The Holy Spirit led the apostles into all the truth by enabling them to write Scripture. The Holy Spirit leads us into all the truth by enabling us to understand Scripture.

Now that's a very important distinction. We need to compare these words with chapter 14 verse 26. Where Jesus speaks of the Spirit's twofold ministry of reminding them of all that Jesus said and of teaching them all things necessary to salvation.

Now in one sense one could say that the fulfillment of that reminding ministry of the Holy Spirit is in the Gospels and the fulfillment of the further teaching ministry leading them into all the truth and showing them things that were to come is in the rest of the New Testament. But the vital distinction is that the Holy Spirit

leads the apostles into the truth by enabling them to write Scripture. He leads us into all the truth by enabling us to understand Scripture.

Now that you see is why it's a very important thing that we do not seek to degrade the rest of the New Testament below the Gospels. And you will find many people who will say this you see. They will say oh yes of course I accept the words of Jesus very happily.

But when you come to the epistles that's just what Peter thinks. Or that's just what John thinks. Or that's just what Paul thinks.

But you see Jesus says ah but that's just where you're wrong. That's what the Holy Spirit says. In fulfillment of my promise to them he will lead you into all the truth.

And that is a cardinal matter in our attitude to the authority and inspiration of the New Testament. When he leads us into the truth and there is a fulfillment of this promise to us. It is not into novel truth.

It is not into truth that is different from Scripture. It is certainly never into truth that is contrary to Scripture. And Scripture is always the final judge and the ultimate court of appeal for everything the Holy Spirit says to any man.

So that when somebody comes and says the Holy Spirit has said this to me. We always bring that word to the arbitrator of Holy Scripture. And the Holy Spirit therefore is this double ministry.

He is the giver of truth and he is the guide into the truth. And in all this work says Jesus he is self effacing. He will not speak of his own authority.

He will glorify me and he is Christ's exalting. There then are the three relationships in skeletal outline of which our Lord speaks. From verse 18 of chapter 15 to verse 15 of chapter 16.

The Christian and the world. The world and the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit and the Christian.

And now in verses 16 to 33 Jesus outlines some of the blessing which will be the fruit of his going and the Spirit's coming. And the first of these is joy out of sorrow. And the key verse is verse 20.

Truly truly I say to you you will weep and lament but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful but your sorrow will be turned into joy. Now in verse 16 the beginning of the passage.

It's obvious that it appeared to the disciples as if Jesus was speaking in riddles. About a little while when they would not see him. And then another little while when they would see him.

A little while and you will see me no more. Again a little while and you will see me. Some of his disciples said one to another.

Verse 17 what is this that he says to us? A little while and you will not see me. And again a little while and you will see me. And because I go to the Father.

What does he mean by a little while? We do not know what he means. Dr. Leon Morris comments it's not surprising that these words of Jesus proved a difficulty to the men in the upper room. They have puzzled Christians ever since.

Well the problem of course really is what Jesus means by these two little whiles. In verse 16 it seems certain that the first little while must be the time. Between his present discourse and his departure.

A little while and you will see me no more. But does he mean by the second little while. The period between his death and his resurrection.

When they saw him in his resurrection body and rejoiced. Or between his death and Pentecost. When they saw the evidence of his power in the world.

Or between his death and his return in glory. When every eye shall see him. Seems most likely that the primary reference may be to the resurrection appearances of our Lord.

But ultimately it may be characteristic of John's way of speaking of several things in one compass. It may refer to all three. Since it is a principle that Jesus is teaching primarily here.

And the principle is this. It is the paradox in all Christian experience. That life comes out of death and joy comes out of sorrow.

The principle is that God is not bringing them through these days of sorrow. Without having blessing and glory in view. Any more than Christ is passing through his anguish and death.

Without being assured of a resurrection and return in glory. Now this is the whole point of the allegory in verse 21. Of the travailing woman you will notice.

Where Jesus having spoken to them about how the world is going to rejoice. And they will be sorrowful. And then when he has come to them a little while.

And they will see him. And they will rejoice. Their sorrow will be turned into joy.

And in verse 21 you get this remarkable allegory. When a woman is in travail. She has sorrow.

Because her hour has come. But when she is delivered of the child. She no longer remembers the anguish.

For joy that a child is born into the world. Now that's not only a parable of the experience of the disciples you see. A sorrow which is going to give way to joy.

It is a parable of Christian experience. And a parable of Christian service. And it's a parable that Jesus takes up with this chaste way.

In which he is able to speak of these things. You see the point is this beloved. That there is some pain in the world.

That is apparently absolutely meaningless. And unproductive. But there is pain of a different order.

There is pain in the world which is productive. And productive of life. And that's what Paul is speaking about when he tells the Galatians.

In the context of his own service. In all the travail and all the agony. That he was passing through.

He says I can only compare it to one thing. I travail in birth until Christ be formed in you. He says this pain and agonizing that I'm going through.

It's not meaningless beloved. He says I would go through it again and again and again. Because of the outcome.

It's productive pain. Death worketh in us but life in you. Let me apply this this morning to some servant of God.

Who is in the midst of travail. I wonder if you have come to Keswick in these days. And you have known what it is to be travailing before God.

In some corner of the world. You may have come back from the mission field in Ontharlo. God knows we don't care nearly enough with a shepherdly heart.

For men and women who are back in this country. Having been in the very front line of the battle in some corners of the world. And you may be wondering how in God's name you are going to go back.

You may even bear in your body this kind of agony. My brother or my sister. May I say to you this morning diffidently.

Because I am not fit to give counsel to so many of you. But let me say this to you. Can you think of your travail like this.

That it may be the birth pangs of a new life that you are experiencing. That this pain, this turmoil, this anguish if you are in the Lord's hands. Is going to be productive.

Can you take the word of God and apply it as a balm to your soul. He that goes forth and weepeth. Bearing precious seed.

Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing. Bringing his sheaves with him. Weeping may endure for the night.

But joy cometh in the morning. Joy out of sorrow. Secondly understanding out of perplexity.

Look at verse 23. You will of sorrow now but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice. And no one will take that joy from you says Jesus.

And that leads on to this 23rd verse. In that day you will ask me no questions. In verse 25 I have said this to you in figures.

The hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in figures. Or in dark sayings. But I shall tell you plainly of the Father.

Verse 29 as disciples say. Ah now you are speaking plainly. Not in any figure.

Now we know that you know all things. Do you see the whole theme that runs through this. Of an understanding that is beginning to dawn out of perplexity.

In verse 23 there is some doubt again as to what that day refers to. Seems most likely that the day may in a general sense. Refer to the new age of the Spirit.

When the disciples will be led into the truth by the Holy Spirit. But once more it's the principle which is the vital thing. And that principle is this.

That our procession towards glory. As God's children. Is accompanied by a gradual dawning of light.

By an increase in understanding. Until the day will come. When we shall see no longer through a glass darkly.

But face to face. And in the meantime as A. M. Carmichael so beautifully says. We have our back to the darkness.

And we are walking into the light. You can trace how this is illustrated in John's gospel itself. It's almost a minor theme of the gospel.

Let me give you two examples of it briefly. In John chapter 12 verse 14. Jesus is coming into Jerusalem you remember.

Sitting upon the earth. And the disciples are perplexed. And in John 12 16 we read.

The disciples did not understand this at first. But when Jesus was glorified. Then they remembered that this had been written of him.

Do you see what is happening? They are in the dark. They don't understand. They are perplexed.

But they are moving towards the day. When Jesus was glorified. Then they remembered.

And they understood. Or in chapter 13 verse 7. When Jesus is washing the disciples feet. And Peter says.

I can't understand this. This seems something that is absolutely contrary. To everything that I can see.

And Jesus says to him. What I am doing you do not know now. But you shall know hereafter.

At a particular period in my life. When I went through some very dark days. Through an experience.

That came into my family. Many people wrote many different kinds of messages. And different things that came in from various loving Christian people.

But there was one that came from a dear brother of mine in Morocco. And it was just a card with these words written on it. What I do thou knowest not now.

But thou shalt know hereafter. At the way the Lord is dealing with all his children beloved. We are moving into the light.

So the day he says. In that day you will ask me no questions. But there is another asking for which there is a different word.

The asking of prayer. And this is part of the whole ministry. Of leading us from perplexity into understanding.

And Jesus goes on to tell us how this is to be revolutionized too. Truly truly I say to you. If you ask anything of the Father.

He will give it to you in my name. Now on the ground of all that Jesus is going to do. In his atoning work.

The disciples will be able to come to the Father. With an assurance that they can ask in Jesus name. And the Father will give them in Jesus name.

You will notice that the proper translation of verse 23. The second half of the verse. Links the giving rather than the asking.

Within the name of Jesus. And you will see the point. Both the disciples right to ask.

And the Father's readiness to give. Are on the basis of what Jesus is going to do. Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name.

Verse 24. Ask and you will receive. That your joy may be full.

How do you see the linking of this blessed gift of prayer. With both the joy that comes out of sorrow. And the understanding that comes out of perplexity.

In that day you will ask me no question. But there is another kind of asking he says. Truly truly and there are words that Jesus uses.

To emphasize something. It is because of his going to the Father. And all that this sorrow is going to mean to them.

That they are going to be able to ask. In the name of Jesus. And asking in that name.

They will receive and their joy will be full. Now verses 25 to 28. And I recognize how we are rushing through this chapter.

In all its length this morning. And you are such wonderful listeners you dear people. I am grateful for the way you pay such attention.

In verses 25 to 28. Our Lord is speaking of the new access to the Father. Which his atoning work will bring.

And that is what he is describing in verse 28. I came from the Father and have come into the world. Again I am leaving the Father and going to the world.

That is one of these great descriptions. Of the downward and upward sweep. Of the Lord's atoning work.

He comes down from the Father into the world. And leaves the world and goes to the Father. And on the basis of that mighty work.

Of atonement and reconciliation. We have access to the Father for ourselves. Now verses 26 and 27.

Are not a contradiction. Of the fact that our Lord has a continuing. Intercessory ministry for the believer.

In that day he says. You will ask in my name. And I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you.

For the Father himself loves you. Because you have loved me. And have believed that I came from the Father.

What does this mean then? Is Jesus saying I am no longer going to have this. Intercessory ministry. Of which we are going to be reading tomorrow in chapter 17.

Does this mean that our Lord does not intercede for the saints? Well now it is not that at all that he is speaking about. It is rather an assurance of the glorious direct access to God. Which Christ's sacrifice will bring.

He is drawing them on you see. Even in the same way that a father will say to his child. Now you do not need me to pray for you anymore.

You can go to the Lord for yourself. Is not that what we say to our children? You can go to the Lord for yourself. You do not need me to pray for you.

Well now Jesus is saying. Because of what I am doing. Because of my coming from the Father into the world.

And leaving the world to go to the Father. You may come to the Father. And you will find that you do not need me to persuade the Father to be gracious to you.

Because his heart is open toward you. In that day you will ask in my name. And I do not say that I shall pray the Father for you.

For the Father himself loves you. Because you have loved me and have believed that I came from the Father. Listen to John Calvin.

He says here we are taught. That we have the heart of God. As soon as we place before him.

The name of his Son. Is not that good? He was a great old boy too. We are taught that we have the heart of God.

As soon as we place before him. The name of his Son. Well now.

Finally. Joy out of sorrow. Understanding out of perplexity.

And triumph in tribulation. Verses 31 to 33. These are Jesus last words to the disciples.

They say to him. Ah now in verse 29 you are speaking plainly. Not in any figure.

Now we know that you know all things. And need none to question you. By this we believe that you came from God.

But in verse 31 Jesus says. Now let's not blind ourselves to the realities. Do you now believe Jesus? The hour is coming.

Indeed it has come. When you will be scattered. Every man to his home.

And will leave me alone. In other words there is a tribulation. Which is yet before them.

And he faces them with the reality. Of his coming agony. And theirs.

For him this coming agony. Means that the shepherd would be smitten. And the sheep scattered.

And you will leave me alone. Isn't it a very striking thing. That Jesus.
Finds throughout the whole of this discourse. That the disciples. Are so little interested.
In what is going to happen to him. It's what's going to happen to them. That they're taken up with.
You know my friends. There's a lesson in that. And I mustn't take time to go into it.
But there is a great lesson in that. There is a kind of religion. Even an evangelical religion.
Which is very selfish. There is a use of the word of God. Even that's very selfish.
I come to it to get a little word. But to help me through the day. Well now.
I am not despising that. God forgive me. If there's even the note of that.
In what I say. But I want to say this to you. If somebody was only interested in you.
For what they could get out of you. Would you not begin to suspect them of cupboard love. Why is it that
God has given us his word.
It is that we might come to know him. Acquaint ourselves with his will. Discover his plan and purpose.
For ourselves and for the world. And give ourselves to the doing of it. He says I shall be alone.
Yet not alone. For the father is with me. But of course the time was to come.
When even the fellowship of the father was hidden. And Jesus was to cry. My God.
My God. Why hast thou forsaken me. And he knew that ultimate loneliness of being cut off.
From men by his holiness. And from God by our sin. For the disciples.
What does it mean that. They are facing. Tribulation.
Jesus has one last word to them. And this brings to a conclusion his discourse. And now he turns to the
father in verse.
In chapter seventeen. The hour is coming. It has indeed come.
He says. When I will. Be going to the father.
And I have said this to you. Verse thirty three. That in me.
You may have peace. In the world. You will have tribulation.
But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world. Now there is something we need to grasp.
As we go this morning. We are both in the world. And in Christ.
In Christ. For the believer. There is glorious and blessed peace.
Peace I leave with you. My peace I give unto you. There is peace in Christ.

For the believer. In the world. There is tribulation.

But the two sides are not equally balanced. Christ has overcome the world. And he says.

Therefore be of good cheer. Do you notice how he tries to take these men. From their sense of defeatism.

Their sense of abandonment. Their sense of weakness and loss. Into a sense of abounding confidence.

And oh beloved. We need this kind of spirit of confidence this morning. To hear the Lord Jesus come and say.

To all this great convocation of people. Be of good cheer. Go out into the world.

Knowing that I have overcome the world. You are going to find tribulation. You are going to find trouble.

But I have overcome. Greater is he that is in you. Than he that is in the world.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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