

Reading: John 16:23-33

Theme: Teaching on the Father and His love.

As we start to look at the passage we read, we will soon realise there are hard things to understand in it! Most of the problems in grasping what is being said occur in v25-28. A sketch outline of the chapter's themes is helpful. v1-6 we see the world's vindictiveness against **Christ's** people. In v7-15 the blessing of the work and person of the **Holy Spirit** promised; in v16-24 the promise the Son will be seen again and His joy known by His people. Now in v25-33 our attention is drawn to the Father - He is mentioned 6x in v25-33 as "the Father" and twice as "God", while in v25-28 it is 5x as "the Father" and once as "God". In this chapter we see the antagonism of the world is a major source of hurt and grief to Christians; but to contrast and balance that, we are shown us the blessings of the triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In this section our attention is directed primarily to God the Father, but it is not a case of full stop, new paragraph, a new subject entirely from v25. For it is connected to what has gone before and arises naturally, organically and freely out of it. In v23-24 our Lord Jesus has been speaking of the fuller knowledge - there would be no questions, be prayer in the name of Jesus and these two things would lead to fullness of joy. In v25-27 the 2 ideas of fuller knowledge and prayer in Jesus' name are taken up and developed in reference to God the Father. Realise these things are not just stuck on and out of place, but flow out of the earlier verses. I want us to note 4 main things from v25-28 to see something of the precious truths in these verses:

1. Unhindered knowledge of the Father. (v25)

The Lord Jesus said to the disciples that He had spoken to them in; “*figuratively*” (NIV): “*proverbs*” (AV) “*figurative language*” (NKJV, NASB), “*figures*” (RSV); “*figures of speech*” (ESV). The best translation of the word is “*allegory*” - a word picture which is not always so easy to understand even if the picture can be e.g. Jesus is the Good Shepherd, the Door, the Light, the Vine, the Resurrection and the Life. Jesus uses this word for such - what they say gives much help, but also can be unclear.

The disciples had so much explained to them - compared to the Pharisees and the Jewish nation, they knew and understood so much, yet even the light they had at that time, was not clear light. There was so much in Jesus’ sayings that needed to be unpacked and unravelled to make sense. Here in v25 the contrast is between what was unclear to the disciples during the time of Jesus’ ministry and what was plain and clear after Jesus’ glorification and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. When they would really and clearly understand the significance of Jesus’ life, death and resurrection etc.

Then what they’d been taught of God the Father made sense. They understood 14:2, 6; the word pictures used more clearly - the Vine, the Good Shepherd etc. about seeing one another in a little while. They learned so much of the Father as they recognised Him in the life, work and ministry of the Lord Jesus. It is important for us to realise that we also see so much of the Father in the Son. The Son is the self-revealing Word of the Father (Hebrews 1:2ff; Matthew 11:27; John 1:18)

Without the Lord Jesus we would never have much of a clue about God. It means any notion, ideas of God that are not related to, based on the Lord Jesus, have to be false and strange. Jesus

reveals, shows, tells us plainly about the Father. The word “plainly” means *“unreservedly, freely, openly, frankly, without concealment, no ambiguity, no use of figures or comparisons.”* The ways, the will, the purposes, the character of God the Father could not be plainly and fully made known until after the death and exaltation of the Lord Jesus. Then, and only then, could the Father be made known – so in Acts 2 Peter declares what God (the Father) was achieving and doing when His Son came to the earth - our attention is on God, His glory and honour - also centred on Christ who poured out the Holy Spirit and was Trinitarian preaching.

We say that in the Gospels we have Jesus’ teaching and then in Acts, in the Epistles, we have Jesus continuing to teach through the apostles and things are plain, clear in these. The writers had a plain and clear understanding of things unpacked, revealed, shown them by the Lord Jesus through the Holy Spirit and they wrote with a previously unknown understanding concerning God the Father and the whole scope and scheme of salvation centred on Jesus.

We may not be able to grasp everything in the Bible, especially the NT, but we can thank God that we have a much clearer light than was available before the coming of Christ and His accomplished work. Yes, we will still not understand everything perfectly - that is reserved for heaven, so we own our frailty, seek the help of God the Holy Spirit and as He glorifies the Lord Jesus, we know more of and glorify the Father, as we learn more of Him.

It is incredible we can always be learning and drawing near to God as our God and heavenly Father – having an unhindered knowledge of the Father and not need to learn of Him through

OT pictures, ceremonies, types and the like. We learn of God plainly and most clearly from and through the Lord Jesus as He shows us the Father and leads us to Him. Then we see:

2. Unrestricted access to the Father. (v26)

The disciples had been used to go to God and know of God through OT means. When they met Jesus, they understood He knew how to pray directly to God and they asked to be taught - perhaps they never imagined they too would have the privilege of unrestricted access to God as Father.

Yet, in that day, when Jesus was exalted and sent the Holy Spirit, they could pray in Jesus' name! This is still the privilege, the wonder, and honour which every child of God has now - to go to God as Father in Jesus' name i.e. the work, person, merit and the Lord Jesus accomplished for us. This is especially so from Pentecost onward, now we as believers can pray in harmony with all made known on the basis of the salvation Jesus accomplished.

Jesus' work, person life etc. is the way we have unrestricted access to the Father. We do not need to go and try to do a deal with God, to win Him over to us. As believers we ask the Father in Jesus' name. Perhaps before this the disciples asked Jesus to pray for them and their needs. Now they are shown they can dispense with Jesus in prayer! As a matter-of-fact so can we! Now I have your attention, let's look at what the Lord Jesus means when He says "*I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf.*" Does it mean or say He will not pray for believers? It could appear He says and means that! Yet the NT emphasises the prayer work of the Lord Jesus (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25) so how do we harmonise these with this verse?

We are to realise and own that no blessing, prayer or answered prayer, comes to us apart from through the intercession of the Son. He is ever living to make intercession for us; He is the Mediator, who brings us to God. What Jesus says in v26 is that He is not someone who has to pray to the Father to incline God's unwilling ear, or to try to get His help when He really doesn't want to.

Yes, Jesus is the Mediator, but it is by His accomplished salvation, by the Holy Spirit being poured out into our lives and the love of God shed abroad in us, we cry out with unhindered access directly to the Father "*Abba Father*". Jesus is not another barrier to go through or another channel on our way to hoping God will hear us. Because of Jesus and all He accomplished, we have the honour and privilege of going directly to God the Father!

Never think of Jesus as a staging post to get to the Father in prayer. If we are a Christian, we are in Christ, are accepted by God the Father in Jesus and we can go directly to God in all He's accomplished for us - no need to use "*in Jesus' name*" as a password like "*Open Sesame*"! Jesus does not pray for believers in the sense of begging God to hear their prayer requests which would otherwise be unacceptable! Our prayers are accepted only because we are in Christ. The Lord Jesus makes intercession, prays for every believer - these are the ones He died for, His work and salvation are sufficient and they are in Him. This is reinforced by our next heading that tells us of:

3. Unimaginable love by the Father. (v27)

We do not need Jesus to win God the Father over to our side, allow us to pray to Him; for the Father **Himself** loves the likes of you and me! This is amazing, unimaginable - God the Father

should love us! We sang earlier “*Amazing love, how can it be?*” Yes, it is amazing, but true! Why should this eternal, almighty God love us? We are told by some it is because we have loved Jesus and believed in Him.

The trouble is, what happens if we find our love and belief weak and faint, up-and-down? Does it affect the love of the Father for us? Some say ‘Yes’ and we can never be sure of really having God’s love until or if we get to heaven. The trouble with taking this verse on its own is that it is rightly a precious verse, but also one that could cause us all sorts of problems! The Bible makes it clear that we can only ever love Christ because He first loved us and this love was not some gradual thing that came on Him and He decided to save us. Not at all; in fact, He loved us before the foundation of the world. In eternity before time, God set His love on us, gave us as a gift to His Son; His Son chose to come to earth to be the sin bearer of His people’s sin and save them from their sin and its consequences.

Sometime in the process of our life, we are drawn by God’s grace to know His love and forgiveness. From our perspective, we believe and love the Lord and experience God’s love; but in fact, God loved us with an everlasting love, worked in us when we were dead in our trespasses and sins; He drew us to His Son, granted us new life, faith to savingly believe and made us aware of His love.

Salvation is all of God, but the moment we believe, we begin to know and understand the unimaginable love of the Father for ones like us. Part of that love experience is unrestricted access to the Father - prayer is possible because of the love relationship that we have with the Son and the Father. This means the Lord Jesus doesn’t pray to win the Father over to our side, for we are

God the Father's beloved children and welcomed, for we are loved (Ephesians 3:17-19). Finally, and very quickly we see:

4. Undertaken mission from the Father. (v28)

In this verse the Lord Jesus declares that the mission He entered into and undertook was from the Father. It seems to summarise the office and nature of our Lord's mission, work. The disciples knew Jesus came from God and says they were right in that belief as He expresses His origin, work and future glory. The disciples were concerned Jesus was leaving them, but they are clearly told He is going to return back to where He came from, as the mission was from the Father and then Jesus would return to the Father.

v28 declares victory and triumph. It underlines Jesus' determined purpose to accomplish all His Father gave Him to do. He came from the Father - He is God, perfectly God, the fullness of deity, the the godhead dwelling in Him; He was pre-existent before His conception and birth, before time He was always God. Yet the eternal Son entered the world - the incarnation and all the Christmas narrative - God made flesh and lived among us; the glorious God the Son lived on a sin filled earth and lived among us. It also points us to His death, resurrection and ascension "*I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.*" Here the Lord Jesus uses the present tense - such was the determination and power of God the Son clothed in humanity.

On the cross, Jesus accomplished our salvation; brought glory to the Father and the Son by it; also, by the resurrection and ascension; Jesus returned back to the Father. v28 summarises the mission the Son undertook from the Father and it contains the eternal glories of pre-and post-incarnation; the wonder of

the incarnation, the death, resurrection, ascension and glorification of the Lord Jesus. This is quite a verse to look at, well worth chewing over its truths.

As I close, I want us to ask if you know this Saviour as your own Saviour and do you realise Jesus left the Father - in all His glory to save and rescue people like us. To know such a Saviour is glorious - to believe on Him, to love Him, to be loved by the Father, to be able to have access to the ear of God the Father is an amazing privilege! To know God is our Father begins as we believe in the Lord Jesus as our own Saviour.

You may question and wonder if God chose you and set His love upon you in eternity past. It's easy to know if you are one of the elect - for John 3:16 tells us - "*whosoever believes*" - God commands us to believe and not to worry about things that are unnecessary. If you have believed, then be sure God did not save you by accident, but He did so deliberately and on purpose.

God willing will come back and continue looking at this chapter next week as we look at v29 onwards.