

**Reading:** John 16:23-33

**Theme:** Boldness, warning and comforting truth.

Last week we looked at v25-28, where Jesus told the disciples amazing things which seem to have made a powerful impact upon their minds, as probably did the whole of the evening's teaching, but especially those last few sayings about the Father. Those things had made a deep impression on the disciples for they understood, as never before, the knowledge the Lord Jesus had. It struck them that Jesus was now speaking clearly, plainly and maybe they thought the appointed time had arrived. They said he knew all things and Jesus made some comments that must have shocked them. This morning we'll look at v29-32 using 3 headings:

### **1. A bold statement of faith.** (v29-30)

Their experiences and things they heard that awesome night in the upper room had already left its mark - such as hearing their Master speak of coming from the Father, entering the world, leaving the world and going back to the Father. It must have seemed intense, yet it made a sort of sense to them.

For a short time, their minds and hearts seemed illuminated - like a flare bursting with a bright light on a dark night, lighting up for a short time all around and glimpses of objects can be briefly seen! So, it seemed with His disciples - a bright momentary flash of understanding came to them, but having that, they assumed they had a clear understanding!

The Lord Jesus knew their questions in v19 and answered those questions and more besides, allowing the disciples to have a glimpse of His knowing all things (His omniscience) shown in the answering of questions they had not asked or

even not yet fully formed and put together to ask. Yet they knew those questions had been answered. They were convinced that Jesus had come from God. Their words in v29-30 were a bold statement of faith and we glimpse how these disciples, at that precise moment of time, felt and believed.

They spoke of their knowledge - even though it was a mistaken knowledge, that they plainly understood Jesus' words and this moved them to make this bold statement. There are times in our lives when we suddenly grasp something in God's word in a way we have never known before and it means so much to us. We can be like the disciples and feel "*This is it!*" and feel that from now on we will have no more problems and difficulties, or that we will not limp along in the Christian life, but soar up like eagles. Sadly, we, like the disciples, can have a mistaken view of our faith and belief. As real and intense as it was and is, we are only briefly affected by its light and that light may soon be eclipsed.

The light which affected the disciples was Christ's omniscience - He knew all things. They owned Him as a teacher, a prophet, a great miracle worker, but here, briefly lighting up their hearts and minds, was this thought and truth that He knew all things, that He is like God and therefore, surely, He had to come from God. They were, at that moment, convinced of that and it brought forth from them this bold statement of faith concerning the Lord Jesus.

Their faith was real, but it was an immature faith; this bold statement was what they felt, but it was a statement of a faith that would be shown to be so weak. They made their

profession boldly, but it would be a different matter a short while later when they faced a hostile mob and instead of standing for the One who they believed came from God, they then ran away!

The disciples did not know themselves or how they would react under the pressure and fear of men and strong temptation. They had not rightly estimated their own strengths or weaknesses; the power of the devil; the shallowness or immaturity of their own faith. They felt they knew things so clearly, but they did not even know their own hearts! In WW1 there were many young recruits who couldn't wait to get to the battlefields as they thought it would be a game, a dramatic, exciting, but short-lived game. The reality they encountered was so much different when they were at the front!

In our Christian lives, we need to be realists and beware of thinking we are so strong that we will breeze through the Christian life, its temptations, difficulties and the like. The apostle Paul had every reason to have confidence in himself - his experiences, knowledge, gifts, dramatic conversion etc. yet he said *“for when I am weak, then I am strong”* (2 Corinthians 12:10).

We are not to think we have arrived, or we are ok, for our weaknesses can be exposed and we fall into temptation as we go through both easy times or testing and trials. We need to honestly own our weaknesses and call on God to hold us and sustain us. Yes, we are to have a boldness in faith, not a self-centred boldness, but having faith and confidence in our God. Now we see:

## **2. A timely word of warning.** (v31-32a)

Here the Lord Jesus warns the disciples of the self-ignorance they were blissfully unaware of. They were bold in their statement “*we know/see... this makes us believe*”, but Jesus spoke words that should have caused them to pause and ponder their own hearts about the things they just said.

The first part of v31 can be translated in 2 ways from the Greek - KJV and NIV footnote and other versions say “*Do you now believe?*” Or the NIV main text translates it as “*You believe that last*” or literally “*You now believe*”. There’s nothing in the sentence structure to give us a clear certainty to which is the correct translation of those words at this time and situation.

Whichever translation we choose, we have to see there’s a timely warning here - that their supposedly bold and strong faith was going to be tested and found wanting. They had spoken the truth, probably more than they realised, than they could apply to their lives. Yet the Lord in His all-knowing, knew there was a time of testing coming that would expose their immature faith and show them lacking a firm and bold faith. So whatever translation we think is right, note Jesus was speaking of the fact they had faith and yet warned them of overconfidence. The Lord owned their statement in v30b as correct when He prayed in 17:8b - although not quoting their words, He was certainly alluding to what they said.

Realise this is not a putdown by Jesus, but a timely warning that their little faith, would be faced with an enormous test and they would be scattered like frightened sheep. He told them that the hour, the time would come and was come. Yes,

they were not running away there and then, but Judas and the mob were on their way; the scheme to catch Jesus was already in hand and so the hour would shortly come, was come in the sense of the events which were already occurring would result in this scattering of the disciples - each to their own home - separate from each other, but certainly from the Lord Jesus.

Jesus knew this, in fact He had predicted it earlier and told them of their denying Him, of His being left alone. Jesus spoke of what He knew would happen, because, as the disciples owned, He knew all things. They would be afraid and would be scattered so that the united work of and among the disciples would end - as the rulers of the Jews would have hoped!

This little flock here in this church, in all churches i.e. all believers are precious to the Lord Jesus and we are to realise there are enemies against God who would have churches and Christians not only bring disgrace to our Saviour and His name, but would want us scattered and not working together, divided, divisive and even the work stop. We are to realise this and pray and live as if the life and well-being of our church depended on each one of us as individual believers. So, we will all be caring and praying for each other, not be puffed up with pride and our own selfish ambitions or built-in, even hidden agendas. Then we will cling to our Lord Jesus for His strength for us all. As a church, we have to own God's blessing, but we then need to cast ourselves on Him and not boast of any blessings, any successes or knowledge, but ask Him to be merciful and help us as individuals and as a church.

The disciples felt they had this knowledge and boasted of their understanding “*now we see, know...*”, but they were overconfident, rash, even arrogant. The Lord Jesus gave this timely warning that showed again His omniscience and should have caused the disciples to seek help and advice from Him. Sadly, they did not, but scattered and the Lord Jesus was abandoned by them.

### **3. A comforting truth.** (v32b)

To all intents and purposes, the Lord Jesus was abandoned and alone as His enemies so easily took Him prisoner later that evening, as they did to Him as they already determined. Jesus seemed all alone, yet He was not alone; for He knew that even as all this happened, His Father was with Him - this great comforting truth. Yes, it would hurt and grieve Him that His bold, boasting disciples would leave Him, even deny Him, but He knew He was going the way of the Father, was doing His will and would glorify the Father.

Previously, in John 8:27-29, Jesus spoke of the Father and of His (Jesus) being lifted up; that the Father was always with Him because He always did what pleased Him. Jesus’ aim was to glorify the Father and even His suffering and death are put in these terms (13:31; 17:1).

Jesus would be able to endure this desertion by the disciples because His Father would be with Him. The presence of His Father was everything to Jesus. In eternity pre-time there had always been this delight and enjoyment of the Father’s love and presence. Even when God the Son took a true human body to Himself, there was a constant union, communion, fellowship between the members of the Godhead; the Father’s

delight in His Son was publicly proclaimed twice *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”*. The Son delighted in doing the Father’s will and even when cut-off from every human and earthly comfort, even as His humanity recoiled at the events before Him, Jesus said *“Nevertheless not my will but yours be done”*.

The Son had the Father always with Him. How then do we reconcile this statement with another sayings of Jesus? e.g. in Matthew 27:46 where Jesus says *“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”* Martin Luther, the great Reformer, wrote on those words *“God forsaken of God, who can understand it?”* Realise the Son was not forsaken as the Son, but as the sin-bearing sacrifice to make peace with God for us - as He took all our wrong upon Him and He was given over to the eternal wrath and punishment of the holy God. At that point the felt presence and love of the Father and Holy Spirit were removed, not known or felt. Never did someone know or delight in the Father’s love as the Son did, but no one ever knew such an agonising wrench as that felt love was totally removed and replaced with His Father’s, now the Judge, wrath against our sin which was upon Him. Yet at that moment, the Father’s love for the Son was never greater - as the Son did perfectly the Father’s will and glorified the Father at such cost to Himself. This is also further revealed to us as the Father did not abandon His Son to the grave, for the resurrection declares the Father’s approval and He owns this was His Son indeed.

It is amazing that the ever-present God the Father should forsake His beloved Son, which is one of the divine mysteries in the accomplishment of our salvation. Yet God the Father

never stopped loving the Son, but delivered Him up freely for us all. Have we recognised how deep the Father's love is for us? The Son was forsaken when He was taking the punishment for our sin, so that we need never ever be forsaken in time or eternity. Here is this great comfort – we will never be forsaken by the great God of heaven in our lives here on earth or in heaven when we have trusted Jesus as our Saviour as Jesus paid all the price for all the punishment we deserved for our sin.

We are to listen and understand this if we are a believer, especially if a struggling believer, because none of us will ever be abandoned or forsaken - for the Lord God Almighty is with us. The only child of God to be ever forsaken by the Father was His One and only beloved Son, who endured that so that people like us will never be forsaken and be with God in heaven for all eternity.

May we learn lessons from this passage that will encourage us to trust more and more in our great God and Saviour as we go on in our living for Him.