

The Upper Room (John 16)

The Sorrow and Solace of the Disciples (16.16-22)

v.16: The Lord speaks of *two* short periods of time ('a little while', a phrase repeated seven times in vv.16-19). The **first** 'little while' has reference to the impending death and burial of the Lord Jesus. In just a few hours he would be buried in Joseph's tomb, and they, having been scattered each to their own things (v.32), would not see (*theoreo*) Him. *Theoreo* means 'to be a spectator' (theatre), 'a prolonged, continual looking'. No longer would they be able gaze upon Him as they had during the past 3.5 years. And yet, wonder of all wonders, after a **second** 'little while' (i.e. three days) they would see (*horaō*) Him again upon His resurrection. *Horaō* means more than merely seeing with the *physical* eye (*theoreo*); it is the sight of the *mind*, the *eye of faith*, 'to comprehend' or 'discern'. Whilst the Lord was here on earth, they gazed upon Him physically, but their apprehension of His person was considerably limited. Now, on resurrection ground, and on into the day of the Spirit, they would have a vastly increased appreciation of Him. We see Jesus (Hebrews 2.9)! **John Phillips:** *The beginning of this new vision was at the resurrection. The enlargement of that new vision was suddenly theirs at Pentecost. The final manifestation of it awaits the rapture when we shall see him 'face to face' (1 Corinthians 13.12). Today we see him with the eye of faith.*

vv.17-19: The disciples had been silent since 14.31. Now they begin to discuss with one another what the Lord means. After all, He had said He was going to the Father and they would *not* see Him (v.10), but then they *would* see Him (v.16)!

v.18: The Greek suggests they 'kept on asking' one another (imperfect tense), not understanding the *purpose* for which He said these things (*legō*), neither the *form* of words He was using (*laleō*). Was it figurative language? **v.19:** The Lord knew (*ginosko*) they desired to ask Him further (cf. Isaiah 65.24). *Ginosko* does not necessarily mean supernatural knowledge; the word is also used of natural powers of observation. Whether it was through apathy, shame or fear, the disciples did not ask the Lord. Instead they 'pooled their ignorance' and discussed the matter amongst themselves! We are oftentimes just as slow to seek Divine help in understanding Scripture. **AW Pink:** *God has designedly put many things in His Word in such a way that their meaning cannot be obtained by a rapid and careless reading. He has done so in order to exercise us, and to drive us to our knees; to make us cry, 'Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law' (Psalm 119.18); and to pray, 'That which I see not, teach thou me' (Job 34.32).*

v.20: 'Verily, verily' (x25 in John's gospel) draws attention to the *unchangeable nature* and *significance* of the statement about to be made. The disciples would show **outward** manifestations of their grief, 'weeping' and 'lamenting' (a word used of mourning in bereavement, cf. Luke 23.27) for Him as one dead (Mark 16.10; Luke 24.38; John 20.11, 15). They would also be 'sorrowful'. What began with outward weeping and lamenting, became a fixed **inward** feeling of sorrow and grief. The Messiah, their great hope, was dead (Luke 24.17, 19-21). What a contrast to the world whose hatred of God was truly revealed as they celebrated and rejoiced the crucifixion of the Son of God (cf. Psalm 35.19; Revelation 11.8-10). Yet, the disciples' sorrow would be *turned to joy* upon His resurrection (see Luke 24.41, 52; John 20.20). It is not merely that their sorrow was replaced by joy, but the very cause of their sorrow – the death of Christ – now became the ground and subject of their joy (**AW Pink**)! **Hendriksen:** *The very event which would cause overwhelming grief would afterward be viewed as a sound reason for superlative rejoicing (Galatians 6.14).* This is a joy which could never be taken from them, or us (**v.22**)! We rejoice in the Lord Jesus today through the Spirit (Romans 5.2; 1 Peter 1.8); a joy which will be fully realised at His coming. *Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice.*

vv.21-22: The picture of a woman labouring in child birth is frequent in the OT to refer to the painful experience of the tribulation period preceding the blessing and joy of Messiah's reign (Isaiah 21, 26, 66; Jeremiah 13; Micah 4; Hosea 13). Here the illustration mirrors the experience of the disciples. As a mother soon forgets the pain and anguish of labour when the baby is delivered, so the disciples would soon forget the sorrow of these few days when they saw the Lord.

v.22: Note the emphasis, 'I' will see you again (cp. v.17, 'ye' shall see me). They would only see Him because He, in resurrection power, would come to them. **Hamilton Smith:** *The seeing of which the Lord speaks can hardly be confined to the fleeting visits during the forty days after the resurrection. It has been well said, 'The risen and living Lord showed Himself to the eye of sense, that He might remain before the eye of faith, not as a memory but as a presence. Throughout the time of His absence, while we are yet on earth, and He in the glory, the words of the Lord will ever be true, 'Ye shall see Me', and 'I will see you'.*

A Summary of the New Dispensation (16.23-28) Requests to the Father (vv.23-24, 26); Revelation from the Father (v.25)

v.23: 'That day' is the day of the Spirit; the present time of the Lord's absence. Throughout their 3.5 years with the Lord, the disciples had been constantly 'asking' (*erotao*, 'demand' or 'enquire') **Him** direct questions. But, in the day of His absence, they would instead 'ask' (*aiteo*) or 'make petition' (as an inferior to a superior) of the **Father** in the Lord's

name. Thus, it is our glorious privilege today to approach the Father as representatives of the Son. We are given the Son's place before the Father and so we are to pray and ask as He would; we claim to be acting for Him when we pray in His name. **William Kelly:** *The Lord is really signifying the great change from recourse to Him as their Messiah on earth for every difficulty (not for questions only, but for all they might want day by day), to that access to the Father into which He would introduce them as the accepted Man and glorified Saviour on high.* Note. This verse in no way supports the teaching that worship (or prayer) cannot be addressed to the Lord Jesus. The general teaching of the NT is that worship is addressed to the Father (John 4.23; Philippians 3.3). The **exception, not the rule**, is worship addressed to the Lord Jesus (Acts 7.59; 2 Corinthians 12.8; Romans 9.5; Revelation 1.17). The Spirit is never addressed in worship or prayer.

v.24: Up until this point in time, they had not approached the Father in this way because the Lord was still with them. The privilege of addressing the Father is suggestive of a new relationship and acceptance before Him that belongs to a new dispensation. The glorious promise is that as we 'go on asking' (present, active tense) in His name, we will receive. Strictly speaking the context is request for understanding in relation to divine truth! As we avail ourselves of this privilege and enjoy answered prayer, whatever is lacking in our 'joy' will be supplied until the cup is *filled to the brim and overflowing*. See 1 Thessalonians 5.16-17 where *praying without ceasing* is the means to securing *rejoicing evermore!* **JC Ryle:** *Ask fully and confidently, and you shall receive fully and abundantly. The joy of a believer depends much on his fervency and earnestness in prayer. He that prays little and coldly must not expect to know much of full joy.*

v.25: What about **revelation** in this new dispensation? The Lord had spoken to them that evening, and in the past, in 'proverbs' (*paroimia*), i.e. 'figurative speech'. His words *gradually* revealed truth and therefore appeared *cryptic*, but they were not able to bear anything more without the Spirit (v.12). And yet, the time was coming when He would speak 'plainly'. After His resurrection and in the day of the Spirit, the disciples would have the capacity to receive 'clear', 'unrestricted' and 'full' teaching (cf. 16.13) in relation to the Father. The Lord began to fulfil this prophecy on the day of His resurrection (Luke 24.27, 45; John 20.17). **Gooding:** *The hour of plain speaking came with His death, resurrection and ascension. Calvary was the mightiest telling out of the Father's heart that could ever be.*

vv.26-28: Having spoken of the **Father** (v.25, cf. v.17), the Lord speaks of the nature of their new relationship to Him. In the new dispensation they would personally approach the Father in the name of the Son. Intercession was not needed on the part of the Son to persuade the Father to hear or answer our prayers. **v.27:** Given our relationship to Christ (love and faith), we belong to the family of God. We are thus assured of God's *phileo* love, a love which springs from natural relationships. They are disciples in the family! **v.28:** This verse gives a remarkable summary of the mission of the Lord Jesus. He came out (*ek*) from alongside (*para*) the Father (eternal relationship), came into (*eis*) the world (incarnation), and was then in the process of leaving the world (through death and resurrection) and returning to the Father (ascension). Their faith in Him and His great purpose must be maintained.

The Scattering of the Eleven (16.29-33)

vv.29-30: It is rather *ironic* that the disciples appear to be (wrongly) claiming the immediate fulfilment of v.25. Their understanding though was weak at best. **v.30:** Because the Lord had perceived and answered their question without them needing to ask (v.19) they were willing to confess that He had come from **God**, but what about His union with the **Father** (v.28)? This appears to be a shallow appreciation of the Lord, not unlike Nicodemus (John 3.2).

vv.31-32: Phillips: *Their confession was a sad mix of dullness and discernment. The Lord did not reject their flawed confession of faith out of hand, but he clearly saw its inadequacy.* **v.31** can either be rendered as a **question** (in which case He is questioning the strength of their faith) or a **statement**, 'You now believe' (in which case He is warning them against over confidence). **v.32:** The fact of the matter is that whatever the professed state of their faith (and they were certainly genuine), in a few moments time the crisis would come and they would all be 'scattered' or 'dispersed' as a wolf scatters sheep (John 10.12). John remained faithful longer than the others, but eventually they all returned to their 'own things', i.e. possessions, homes and pursuits (John 20.2; 21.2-3). The disciples would forsake Him, but the Father **never** (Genesis 22.6; Isaiah 50.7)! Though Christ, as sin-bearer, was forsaken of His God at Calvary, the Father was ever with (*meta*, in close proximity) Him. This is one of the great mysteries of Scripture.

v.33: The discourse of the Lord that night was primarily in order to set their hearts at peace. No matter the trials and sorrow of the forthcoming hours, they could **rest confident** in Him. The Lord speaks anticipatively as the mighty Victor. He had already overcome much of the world's hatred and would now emerge victorious from the climax of that opposition at Calvary. Every believer can thus be of 'good courage' because we share His victory with Him.