

## 2. Father and Son

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, let's turn to John chapter 14 again, these great chapters 14, 15 and 16, which with chapter 17 as well, the great prayer, consists of what is often called the farewell discourse.

Now, essentially, in this block of teaching, chapters 14, 15 and 16, and as I say, you might add chapter 17 as well, what Jesus is doing is preparing his friends, his disciples, for life after his departure.

He knows that he is about to leave them, but they are confused and upset. They can't clearly perceive what is going on, and that's why we have a number of puzzled questions from different disciples as the discourse develops.

You'll see, for example, Thomas' puzzled question in chapter 14, verse 5, Lord, we don't know where you're going. How can we know the way? There's Phillips in verse 8, which isn't quite a question, but it's a question in reality, if not in form.

Lord, show us the Father. We want to see the Father. Or look back to chapter 13, verse 37, where Peter asks him a question. Lord, why can I not follow you now? These questions show that they're puzzled.

[ 1 : 15 ] Now, Jesus perceives everything clearly, of course, but the disciples are in a fog of misunderstanding. Is he leaving us? Is that what he's saying? Where is he going?

Why is he going? Where do we go from here? That's the state of mind that they're in. And Jesus answers their troubled questions. But more than that, he teaches them what their life's work now needs to be after his departure to heaven.

So the plan for them is not to go back to their old trades, back to their fishing or working for the inland revenue, that kind of thing. Not at all. They are now to be the first Christian missionaries. In fact, the very word apostle means somebody who is sent out. They've got work to do. It's going to be difficult work. They're going to catch it in the neck from all sorts of opponents.

But it is going to be fruitful work. The work that they must do is to spread the gospel, to preach and proclaim the good news about Jesus. And the Lord is going to equip them with the power of the Holy Spirit so that they can make their testimony to Jesus boldly and effectively.

[ 2 : 26 ] So Jesus has a great deal to teach them on this night before his death. These men, you might say, are still in the first form in the school of Christian discipleship.

Yes, they may be apostles, but they still have a huge amount to learn. So in chapter 14, verses 1 to 6, which we were looking at last week, he's been teaching them about heaven, about how he's going to the cross and then the resurrection so as to prepare the way to heaven for them.

And he has insisted, you see in verse 6, that he is the only way for them or for anybody to go to heaven. And he's framed his teaching in that wonderful phrase at the beginning of verse 1, let not your hearts be troubled.

Why not? Because heaven is real. This great future is assured. His words about the way to heaven can be trusted, indeed must be trusted. All right, well that's just by way of recapitulating the ground that we covered last week.

Now this week, I want us to look really at verses 7 to 11. And the conversation you'll see develops further. But let's first notice from chapter 16, Jesus' own explanation of why he's giving his disciples this extended teaching.

[ 3 : 43 ] Have a look at the first verse of chapter 16. I have said all these things to you. He really means all the content of chapters 14, 15 and 16. I've said all these things to you to keep you from falling away.

Now, did you expect him to say that? It's a rather unsettling verse, isn't it? Could the apostles, these chosen 11, fall away? We know that Judas did, but could these 11?

Now, as far as we know, none of them did. They all stayed true to Jesus. But Jesus is warning them here, in no uncertain terms, that they will be tempted to desert him and his cause.

So as we read verses 7 to 11 this evening in chapter 14, let's remember why Jesus said the things that he said on that night. His reason was very practical. So this upper room discourse, or this farewell discourse, is not like an afternoon class in the theology faculty of a British university, where some dry old professor is discussing points of doctrine with a group of yawning students who are wishing to be outside in the February sunshine playing football.

No, this is life and death stuff. Jesus is teaching his disciples some great truths about himself so as to shore up their morale, so as to stiffen their spines, so that when the bullets come flying at them, they won't simply run for cover.

[ 5 : 13 ] But turn from the first verse of chapter 16 to the last verse of chapter 16 as well. Let me read that verse, verse 33. I have said these things to you, so he's giving them another reason why he's giving them all this teaching.

I've said these things to you that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but take heart, I have overcome the world.

So there's another reason why Jesus says all that he does say in chapters 14, 15 and 16, so that they may have peace in him. In other words, so that a great sense of peace, deriving from their knowledge of him, will fill their hearts and sustain them through the long years in which they will be his front-line missionaries.

Don't you think that final verse of chapter 16 is one of the most strengthening verses in the whole Bible? I've said these things to you that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but take heart, I've overcome it.

Won't that verse do for the toiling Christian what beefsteak does for the oarsmen and what a can of spinach does for Popeye's biceps? It is a strengthening verse.

[ 6 : 26 ] In the world, says Jesus, you will have tribulation. Watch my lips. It's as though Jesus is saying to his friends, watch my lips. It will be very tough for you to be a determined Christian who publicly acknowledges me and keeps on preaching the gospel.

The world will not applaud you. It will give you a load of trouble. But I'm saying all these things to you, all this of chapters 14, 15 and 16, so that you will have peace in me and so that you will not fall away.

So as we turn back now to chapter 14, verses 7 to 11, let's remember that that is Jesus' purpose.

This is not some academic discussion designed to tickle the intellect.

This is teaching designed to put iron into the blood of the apostles. And by extension, it's designed to put iron into our blood as well, lest we fall away, lest we crumble under the hail of buckshot which the world, the flesh and the devil will most certainly launch at us, beginning at 8 o'clock this evening as we leave the warmth of the Christian fellowship and walk out into the February night.

Now the subject of our verses, we might say, is the Father and the Son. How are the apostles supposed to understand the relationship between Jesus and his Father?

[ 7 : 52 ] If they can take on board what Jesus is teaching here, they will not fall away. They will have such a burning conviction of who Jesus is that they will be prepared to live for him and to die for him if necessary.

So let me take this material under two headings. First, the believer longs to know God. Look at the way the conversation develops between verse 6 and verse 8.

Jesus explains in verse 6 that he is the way to the Father, indeed that he is the only way. But he then moves from the question of how to get to the Father to the question of how to know the Father. So he says in verse 7, If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.

At which point, Philip says to him, Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us. So what Philip says in verse 8 virtually gainsays what Jesus has just said in verse 7.

[ 9 : 01 ] In verse 7, Jesus has said, From now on, really from my being with you, you do know the Father and you have seen the Father. What he means is you know the Father through knowing me and you've seen the Father because you've seen me.

And in fact, you're looking at him, at me now, with your two bright eyes at this very moment and thus your eyes are seeing the very image and reflection of the Father as I speak to you.

To which Philip, wearing what you might say is the dunce's cap at this moment, says, Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us. Now, we'll come to Jesus' astonishing and world-revolutionising reply in just a moment, but I want us to linger on Philip's words first because they express something that is deep in the hearts of those who belong to the Lord.

What Philip is saying in verse 8 is, I want to see God. Show us the Father and we shall be satisfied. That will be enough. Now, don't you think that is a bold request? Bold to the power of ten. To ask to see God. Is that not daring?

[10:15] Do you dare identify with that request? William Temple, a godly Archbishop of Canterbury and a fine scholar, wrote a study of John's Gospel just before the outbreak of the Second World War.

And this is his comment on verse 8. He's quoting here from the King James Version, which of course he would have used. So he quotes the little passage first. Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us.

And then Temple writes this. That is the craving which alone causes all our restlessness. If that be sated, all desire is quiet.

We need to learn that this is our one great need. That's the heart of what people want. That's what he's saying. Don't you think those are penetrating words?

There is a restlessness in us which is not satisfied by anything that this world can give us. Don't you find that you're restless even after moments of great achievement and triumph?

[11:22] For example, if you're working for a company in business, you might be set a goal or a project by your boss and after a year or two of hard work you achieve your goal and your boss is very pleased with you but still you're not satisfied.

Or perhaps you're a person who climbs Monroe's and you get to a certain age and you've climbed... You know what a Monroe is? You do, don't you? Any English people here? A Monroe is a hill over 3,000 feet in Scotland.

So you climb all the Monroes and you do it by the age of, I don't know, 30, 35 and you're not satisfied. How do you know that? Because you want to start all over again and do it again a second time. Or, you go to Morayfield and you watch Scotland beat England by a score of 45 against 7.

An unlikely scenario. But, but you're still not satisfied because you want to see them do it again the very next year, don't you? Ecclesiastes puts it like this to the preacher in his first chapter.

All things are full of weariness. A man cannot utter it. The eye is not satisfied. with seeing nor the ear filled with hearing. Of course not.

[12:37] Because in this broken world our hearts are out of kilter. We're not capable of being satisfied finally and fully until our eyes come to rest on God himself.

And that's really what Philip is saying here in verse 8. And this request of Philip, I want to see the Father, that has a long history through the Old Testament. Think for example of Psalm 42.

As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?

Life is almost unbearable for that godly psalmist until he can see God and be with him. Or think of King David in Psalm 17. Now that's quite a short psalm.

I think it's 15 verses long. But in Psalm 17, as in so many of David's psalms, the king is surrounded by tribulations. He has adversaries snapping at his heels constantly.

[13:40] And Psalm 17 is a desperate prayer that the Lord would deliver David from his enemies. But he ends the psalm with these words. As the Lord gives him a wonderful sense of assurance about his eternal future.

He says this, As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness. When I awake, I shall be satisfied with your likeness.

Which means with you as I see you. Or think of Moses, God's friend in Exodus chapter 33, saying to God almost with a fierce determination, Please, show me your glory.

That's what the believer wants to see God. The ultimate destination of Christian people is not merely heaven. It's the very sight of God himself.

In the city of heaven, the new Jerusalem, those who are Christians shall not only be filled with wonder at the streets and the walls and the foundations and the architecture, the twelve gates and the thronging multitudes of angels and happy people.

[14:49] Much more than that, we shall see God. and we shall see Jesus in his glory and we shall know then what it means to be satisfied. So friend, don't worry if you're a Christian but you're aware of a sense of restlessness deep inside.

It's normal. It's normal. You will be restless until finally you're able to see the king of heaven in his unclouded glory. So there's the first thing.

The believer longs to know God. Now second, the believer discovers that Jesus and the Father are one.

Or if you like, that Jesus lives in the Father and the Father lives in Jesus. That's more the language that's used here. Look at verses 8 and 9. Philip says, Lord, show us the Father.

And Jesus replies with a sense of sadness, almost frustration. Have I been with you so long, something like three years now, and you still do not know me, Philip?

[15:57] What he means is, you still don't know who I am. You still don't recognize me. The truth is, Philip, that whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, you misty-eyed fellow, show us the Father?

Are you still so blind? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? What he means is, I want you to understand, Philip, that the full nature of God the Father himself dwells in me and is expressed in everything that I am, in my life and my words and my works.

I am not the Father, Philip. I am the Son. The Father is not a human being as I am. So he and I are distinct from each other. He is God the Father. I am God the Son.

But although I am a human being, the very fullness of his divine nature, his deity, dwells in me. So my deity is not watered down by virtue of my being a man.

I am not a sub-divine human, a sub-divine being. The fullness of the divine nature is my nature, even while I am also fully a human being.

[17:06] Now, friends, I don't propose to launch into a great doctrinal discussion of the ins and outs of theological debate concerning the precise nature of the relationship between the Father and the Son.

It's a critically important subject and it became a matter of great debate and controversy in the early centuries of the Christian Church, particularly in the 4th century AD.

Councils, great gatherings of church leaders, were set up to debate and decide the issues. There was blood on the carpet. There were splits. There were heretics and heresies.

And finally, as this process began to work through, great creeds and definitions and doctrinal statements were articulated and set forth to help the churches to understand the biblical truth about who Jesus is, how he's fully divine while at the same time being fully human.

I'll just give you a little flavour of this. One of the most doughty champions of the truth was a man called Athanasius. And Athanasius was Bishop of Alexandria from 328 to 373.

[18:16] And there's a famous creed known as the Creed of Athanasius which he and fellow workers developed in the middle of the 4th century. I'll just read a few lines of the creed to you and you'll see that it's all to do with how we should understand the relationship between not only the Father and the Son but the three persons of the Trinity.

So Athanasius writes this, the Catholic faith is this, and of course by Catholic he doesn't mean Roman Catholic, he means the faith of the universal Church of Christ.

Catholic is universal. The Catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in unity.

neither confounding the persons nor dividing the substance. For there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Ghost.

But the Godhead, now Godhead means Godness or Godhood, but the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one. The glory equal, the majesty co-eternal.

[19:28] Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. And so it goes on. Not easy to read, but it's magnificent stuff.

Athanasius, there is concern to express in unambiguous language the equal divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and how the three persons of the Holy Trinity, while being three distinct persons, are yet one in substance or in nature.

Now if we ask, why did these controversies rage in the early centuries, and if we ask, why indeed do they still rage to some degree today, you talk, for example, to a Jehovah's Witness, and you'll discover that he doesn't believe that Jesus is fully and eternally God in the way that the New

Testament teaches.

So if we ask, why these controversies, and why is there a resistance in some quarters to the idea that Jesus is as God the Father is, surely our passage here in John 14 helps us to see why. Here is Philip, one of the chosen ones, one of the apostles, who has been with Jesus for three intense years of training and mission, and yet he still hasn't realized that to see Jesus is to see the Father.

[ 20 : 47 ] Why? Because it is inherently a tall order to think that somebody who is obviously a human being might also be divine.

You think of it from the point of view of Philip and these other men. Jesus was so obviously human. They'd lived with him for three years, so Philip had seen Jesus tired and yawning, asleep, hungry, sweating, in need of a wash, in need of what the Americans would call the bathroom.

He wasn't some transparent wraith. He was clearly a human being, a man. Now, Philip would have seen his power at work, in his works, in his deeds, his miracles.

He'd even seen Jesus raise the dead. But Philip was still blind to the reality of who it was he was dealing with. The tectonic plates of his understanding needed somehow to be shifted.

He needed an earthquake. And here it is in verse 9. Philip, the Lord, is saying, look at me. You're looking at the Father. Don't say, show us the Father. I am showing you the Father.

[ 21 : 55 ] He dwells in me just as I dwell in him. Now, why is Jesus saying all these things and insisting on all these things? Well, he's told us in chapter 16, verse 1, that it's to keep the apostles from falling away when they come up against opposition and hatred of the world.

So, how is this knowledge that Jesus is fully divine, how is this going to keep the apostles from falling away? Well, I think it works something like this.

If you follow a mere human guru, some kind of a spiritual teacher, you're following a human being just like yourself. Somebody who is mentally frail, morally flawed, physically decaying, and in the end, mortal.

The world has thrown up thousands of such gurus, hasn't it? Sadhus and mystics and charismatic cult leaders, all sorts of people who claim to be something very special. And what happens to them?

Well, in the end, they are all placed in a coffin and their influence peters out. Would you be prepared to die for a person like that? Only if you're a bit twinkie-twankie in the head.

[ 23 : 10 ] But if you know that your master, your leader, is God incarnate, that though he died, he was raised never to die again, if you know that he gives eternal life to all who belong to him, and that he is the way and the only way to God the Father, and if you know that his dying is the means of your forgiveness, you will stick to him through thick and thin.

You'll be his man, his woman, whatever brickbats come flying at you. You'll know that you're not following some fly-by-night or some self-important swaggerer who struts about for a while and then disappears.

Philip, Jesus is saying, you need to know who I am because once you do, you will stick to me and you won't fall away. And then in verses 10 and 11, Jesus adds some further words which are designed to clinch what he is saying and to drive his point home.

Let me read those two verses, 10 and 11. Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you, I do not speak on my own authority but the Father who dwells in me does his works.

Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me or else believe on account of the works themselves. Now, the second half of verse 10 contains quite a surprise and I think it's easy to miss what Jesus is saying here and what he means by it.

[ 24 : 39 ] Look at that second half of verse 10 from the words that I say. I think we'd expect Jesus, as a matter of logic, to say this, the words that I say to you, I do not speak on my own authority but the Father who dwells in me speaks his words.

In other words, you'd expect him to say that the words that he is saying are really the Father's words. But what he actually says is that the words that he is saying are the Father's works. He means that when he speaks and mighty works of power result, it is the Father displaying his power through the words of the Son. Now, the most obvious recent example of this in John's Gospel is the raising from the dead of Lazarus in John chapter 11.

Remember the story how Jesus goes to the tomb where Lazarus has been lying dead. He's been dead for four days so he's very dead and not smelling too good. John the Evangelist emphasizes that fact to show how dead he is.

And Jesus goes to the mouth of the tomb and he calls out Lazarus come out and he comes out. So would you.

[ 26 : 00 ] Who can resist the voice that wakes the dead? And in John 14.10 Jesus is saying that the words words of that kind are the works of the Father thus demonstrating that the Father dwells in Jesus.

The words of Jesus are the exercise of the Father's supernatural power. Think back to Genesis. When God spoke in the first place he created everything by his words.

His words produced his works. He brought to life things that had no previous existence. He created life simply by speaking. And that's equally true of Jesus.

He recreates life. Only the power of God can bring life to a corpse. So having spoken in verse 10 of his words as a demonstration of the power of God he then in verse 11 gives the apostles a choice of two alternatives.

The first alternative is that they simply believe him. Take his word for it. That he is in the Father and that the Father is in him. But he then says if that's too much to swallow if that's too much like asking a man to run before he can walk I'll give you an easier alternative and that is that you look at my works of power the signs that I'm doing the miracles and on the basis of them you come to the conclusion that the Father and I dwell in each other.

[ 27 : 31 ] So either take it straight from my mouth or let my works of power convince you. We're drawing towards a close but I wonder if I can to show how important this is to every single person here in the building.

First let me say a word to those who are not Christian people perhaps I should say not yet Christians. You're here tonight I don't know who you are but I'm sure that there are some and let me say we're delighted to welcome you here to St. George's Tron.

We hope you'll keep coming. Our Sunday worship is a public meeting it's not just open to the converted it's for you too. But I imagine that you're here because something or somebody has awakened in you an interest in God.

You're wondering perhaps if there is a God and if there is what is he like and how can he be known? Those are fundamental questions those are the really important questions and I'm sure you'll see from this passage in John's Gospel how Jesus answers them.

His answer is not at all in tune with the received wisdom of the world. If you were to go to the world's religious experts with your questions you'd probably be told to carry out some kind of careful and lengthy investigation into the nature of God.

[ 28 : 52 ] Go to India somebody would say and see if you can find God in the rituals and philosophies of Hinduism or go to Saudi Arabia the heart of Islam and see if you can find God in the holy places of Islam in its pilgrimages and its fastings and prayers.

Go to China to Japan to South America investigate the belief systems of Buddhism or of the Native Americans. The received wisdom of the world on these things is far keener on seeking and journeying than it is on finding.

But Jesus says to Philip whoever has seen me has seen the Father the real God. You need look no further than Jesus and you have found God.

So friend if you're not yet a Christian do take heart this is the truth to know Jesus is to know God and once you come to believe his words you'll find that you belong to his people and that your life is one of great adventure and joyful struggle.

Struggle yes but joyful struggle and you discover too that your destination is heaven. Well let me say a word also to the many here who are already Christians.

[ 30 : 10 ] If to see Jesus is to see the Father and if to know Jesus is to know the Father and if the knowledge and enjoyment of God is the great purpose for which we are created then the great project of your life and mine is to get to know God better by getting to know Jesus better.

How well then do you know him? I mean Jesus. If you're a Christian you have begun to know him but there's so much more to know.

It's a constant discovery. Years ago when I was a young Christian if Christian people were discussing their conversion they would quite often say I came to know the Lord in such and such a

year when I was such and such an age.

These days you don't hear that phrase quite as often. People will more frequently speak of how they've become a Christian how they've been saved how they've been born again. Now think of that more old fashioned phrase I came to know the Lord in such and such a year.

Of course that's true in a way but when you're a baby Christian the truth is that you've only just started to know the Lord. You don't get to know him fully overnight.

[ 31 : 32 ] And that's why the Christian life is such an adventure of discovery. There is so much to find out about God and we get to know the Father as we get to know Jesus.

So friends let's make it the great project of our lives a lifetime great project to get to know Jesus. Now by all means let's have other lesser projects going on as well as long as they don't become too important to us.

For example your project might be to learn the flute or the bassoon or to learn five languages or to climb the matterhorn to become an astrophysicist to breed a champion budgerigar. These are good things to do.

They're fine, they're healthy, they make a contribution to society. Well I'm not so sure about the budgerigars but the other things do. But God made us first and foremost to know him and to know his son.

There is nothing greater in human life than to get to know the Lord. Would you want to get to heaven and find that the Lord of heaven is still a comparative stranger?

[ 32 : 36 ] There's no need. The Bible is open before us and it's the Bible that teaches us to know both the Father and his son. Do you still not know me Philip?

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?

Let's pray together. Lord Jesus our Savior we praise you for these words that you spoke with such love and earnestness to your eleven friends on that great and dreadful night.

And we think of you persuading them and teaching them that to see you was to see the Father and to know you was to know him. And therefore we pray Lord Jesus that in all the years that remain to each of us you will help us as we read our Bibles and study them and talk about them and help each other.

We do ask that you will help us to know you. We pray that when eventually we see you face to face it will not be as comparative strangers but as those who know you well already.

[ 34 : 05 ] And we ask that your hand of grace will be upon us leading us forward opening our minds and our hearts deepening our sense of love for you and joy in you and delight in you so that we know you better and better and we ask it to the glory of your name.

Amen.