

PEACE IN A TROUBLED WORLD 3

Another Counsellor – John 14:15-31

Context

The context is that Christ is preparing the New Covenant Community He has founded (the disciples are the “embryonic” Church) for His departure. We need to understand the fear and anxiety the disciples must have felt at the prospect of being left without Jesus. Their relationship with Him had been the most important thing in the preceding three years of their life – it was, like the best of relationships, life-transforming.

Relationships have never been more complicated than in our 21st Century world. Just consider the case of 76-year-old Bill Baker of London who married Edna Harvey in 1981. His new wife happened to be the mother of his granddaughter's husband. That's where the confusion began, according to Baker's granddaughter, Lynn.

"My mother-in-law is now my step-grandmother. My grandfather is now my stepfather-in-law. My mum is my sister-in-law and my brother is my nephew. But even crazier is that I'm now married to my uncle and my own children are my cousins."

The pattern for family life has become much less uniform in our modern society, with the traditional two parent family becoming a rarity. Not only this, but with rising levels of pre-marital sexual activity, including amongst teenagers and rising divorce rates, there is less and less trust in the ability of human relationships to pass the test of time. In many countries birth rates are worryingly low as many young people prefer to choose career over family life. The result is potentially falling populations in many countries including Italy, Russia and Japan.

And yet, we are convinced that relationships are vital to human health both at the personal and social levels. A newborn baby needs a nurturing relationship (needs to bond), ideally with its mother. Studies of newborn monkeys who were given mannequin mothers at birth showed that, despite the efforts of the baby monkeys to get a response through holding and touching the mannequins, the lack of a parental response caused stunted development, sadness, and failure to thrive in the young monkeys. And as we continue our lives we seek relationships in which we will be noticed, valued and accepted. James Blunt in his hit song “You're Beautiful” sings of seeing a woman on the subway, and although she was with another man she caught his eye. The song is tragic as it moves from his hope (and unspoken “plan”) that he could be with her through his belief that they “shared a moment that will last till the end” to his resignation to the fact that they would never be together and (if I read the video correctly) his suicide as a result. Behind the song is the hope of something meaningful that would last eternally – a connection between two people that would bring meaning to the singer's life. Author Sir Hugh Walpole wrote about this kind of meaningful relationship:

“The most wonderful of all things in life, I believe, is the discovery of another human being with whom one's relationship has a glowing depth, beauty, and joy as the years increase. This inner progressiveness of love between two human beings is a most marvellous thing”

Surely we must agree that there is truth in this statement. Our happiness is bound up inextricably with relationship to others – being needed and needing, being loved and loving, being respected and respecting. In the words of one writer, Sidney Madwed:

Without relationships, no matter how much wealth, fame, power, prestige and seeming success by the standards and opinions of the world one has, happiness will constantly elude him.

And yet, we are faced with one unavoidable problem. All human relationships seem to fail us in one way or another. Whether it is through unfaithfulness, selfishness, lack of compromise, illness or death, sooner or later we will be disappointed. Not only this, but we are often the cause of the failure in our own relationships, and often we struggle to know ourselves never mind to know others. One best-selling self-help book claims that:

You do not need to be loved, not at the cost of yourself. The single relationship that is truly central and crucial in a life is the relationship to the self. Of all the people you will know in a lifetime, you are the only one you will never lose (Jo Coudert in *Advice From A Failure*)

How are we to respond to this? Is the author right to claim that the most important relationship and the only lasting relationship we can have is with ourselves? Is the ultimate answer to happiness to be found in being more at peace with and more accepting of yourself? Is our starting point in understanding our world really meant to be our relationship to ourselves? In John 14:15-31 we will discover how Christ's words to His disciples provide a radically different view of relationships. He will point us beyond ourselves, beyond our relationships with others, to the eternal origins of relationship itself.

Towards a theology of Relationships

The theme of relationship in this passage is remarkable. **The Christian life is not simply a philosophy (that would depend only on engaging our minds), a set of ethical principles (that would depend only on engaging our will), or an ecstatic experience (that would depend only on engaging our emotions). It is a dynamic, living relationship that embraces our mind, heart and will.** The starting point for the disciples is the relationship the disciples have had with Christ over the preceding three years. Now that they are faced with losing Him they will feel like “orphans” (v18). This word does not only speak of children with no parents, but of all people who have no-one to provide care for them. However, for Christ the starting point is not this relationship with the disciples, or any human relationship. His history of relationship stretches back before His birth through time and even back before the creation of the world. The pattern for all relationships is found within the godhead in the trinity itself.

The origin of relationship – the trinity

The fact that God is three persons in one (commonly called the doctrine of the “trinity” – literally meaning “three in one”) is a central claim of the Christian faith. It is hinted at in the Old Testament, for example:

- On several occasions God describes Himself in the plural (Genesis 1:26, 3:22, 11:7; Isaiah 6:8)
- In two Psalms of David two separate people are described as God (Psalms 45:6–7; 110:1)
- The Spirit of the Lord is often spoken of, working with God’s people, however this was understood by the Jews to be an extension of God’s life and person rather than a distinct person within the godhead

However, the overwhelming emphasis in the Old Testament is on the uniqueness and singleness of God (this is enshrined in the Jewish confession of faith taken from Deuteronomy 6:4 – “The LORD our God, the LORD is one”), and no one could be expected by reading the Old Testament alone to come to the conclusion that God exists in three persons. It is only in the New Testament that the reality of the trinity becomes clear, as Christ is revealed as the incarnate God who is sent by the Father and subsequently sends the Spirit. The word “trinity” is not found in Scripture, and nowhere does it explicitly say that the godhead is three in One, but the truth of the trinity is clear from the following New Testament facts:

1. Jesus Christ is presented as God incarnate who eternally existed as God and with God before His incarnation.

This truth is explicitly stated in **John 1:1-18**, and is also clear from many other New Testament passages including the following:

- **John 10:30** – Jesus and the Father are one
- **John 20:28** – Thomas calls Jesus “My Lord and my God!” Jesus commends him for it (v29)
- **Romans 9:5** – Paul says that Jesus is “God over all, for ever praised”
- **Philippians 2:6** – Jesus was “in very nature God” and became human (vv7&8)
- **Colossians 1:15** – Jesus is the “image of the invisible God”
- **Colossians 2:9** – “in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form”
- **Hebrews 1:3** – Jesus is “the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being”
- **Hebrews 1:8** – Jesus is identified as God based on a quote from Psalm 45:6&7
- **Titus 2:13** – Jesus is described as “God our Saviour”
- **II Peter 1:1** – Jesus is called “our God and Saviour Jesus Christ”
- **I John 5:20** – Jesus is “the true God and eternal life”

2. The Holy Spirit is spoken of as being God:

- When Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit, Peter said that he had lied to God (Acts 5:3-5)
- He is described as eternal (Hebrews 9:14)
- He is called both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9)

3. The New Testament authors consistently speak of Father, Son and Holy Spirit being active together in unison, for example:

- Matthew 28:19 – new believers are to be baptised in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit (note this is one “name” – united authority of three persons)
- Acts 2:32-33 – Peter shows how God (the Father) raised Jesus to life and Jesus sent the Spirit
- Romans 1:1-4 – the gospel begins with the Father, is enacted by the Son and completed with the Spirit
- I Corinthians 12:4-6 – working together in giving gifts for service to the Church
- II Corinthians 13:13 – the famous “grace” uses the three names in one blessing
- Galatians 4:4-6 – God sent the Son and later sent the Spirit of His Son

- Ephesians 4:4-6 – there is one Spirit, one Lord and one God and Father of all

So, we see two equal truths:

- There is only one God (the monotheistic claim of Deuteronomy 6:4 remains true)
- Three distinct persons are called God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit

As human beings we may not be able to reconcile these two truths completely in our reasoning, since the idea of being one being yet three persons is foreign to our own experience, yet we believe and maintain that it is true. The fact that the very nature of God is difficult for us to comprehend should not surprise or distress us, since He is the infinite, eternal, omni-present God and we are finite and bound by time and space. He is God and we are not! The three persons of the trinity always work together and have only one will and purpose. However, their relationships with mankind are different, and they have a relationship between one another. So, the Word can be God but be with God (the Father). We must be careful in our language to reflect the indivisibility of the trinity, as at times we tend to divorce the actions of the three so much that we speak almost as if we worship three gods. The Father is not the Son, and the Spirit is not the Father and yet the Spirit is the Spirit of both the Father and the Son (Romans 8:9), and the Son and the Father are one (John 10:30). So, then, the original pattern for relationship is found within the nature of God Himself – Father, Son and Spirit in harmonious, loving, inter-dependent relationship. We cannot say how adequate this language is in describing the eternal nature of God (one of the debates about the trinity is the question of whether it expresses the essential nature of God even before creation or if it is only adequate to describe His relationship to His creation), but we do know that Scripture presents the God-head as relational at its core.

The extension of relationship – the Mission of God

God created mankind to relate to Him – to know Him and enjoy Him, and to know the blessings of living according to His will and purpose. This is the very nature of worship – worship is a lifestyle of loving relationship to God that recognises His glory and reflects it through obedience. Man was created to worship God, but in sin we have rebelled against His authority and rule over us, and have declared ourselves to be kings in our own right. The results have been disastrous – human nature, human society and the entire created order have been spoiled, and we have subjected ourselves to the righteous judgement of God. But God is on a mission! His mission is to restore relationship. He wants us to know Him. He wants us to have good relationships with one another. He wants to re-create the Universe so that our relationship with His New Heavens and Earth will be harmonious and productive. At the heart of these three essential relationships (with God, with one another and with our world) is our desperate need to be accepted and directed. Our lack of self-worth is not simply because we lack affirming love but also because we lack purposeful guidance. God wants to offer us both – His unfailing grace and His perfect righteousness. Only by relationship with Him can we be restored and so bring His grace and truth into our society and stewardship of the world.

And so, the story of the ages is the story of God's Mission to form a people of His own who will know Him and with whom He will make His dwelling place. The people of Israel were a picture of that reality, brought into a covenant relationship with God, but without a solution for sin there could be no genuine community where God could live with His people. The Old Testament prophets dreamed of a time when God could truly live with His people (Jeremiah 31:34 and Ezekiel 37:27). And so, God's ultimate master plan swung into action – the Word became human and dwelt among man!

In verse 28 of this passage Jesus makes a difficult statement. He says that "the Father is greater than I". This statement seems to contradict His earlier statement that He and the Father are one (John 10:30) and the consistent claim of the apostles that Jesus is fully divine (see above). We must pause to consider what Christ means by this statement. Repeatedly throughout His earthly ministry Christ spoke of having been sent by the Father, doing the will of His Father and even being dependent on the Father (this is a particular focus in John's gospel – 4:34, 5:19, 43, 6:37, 44, 57). In His prayer before the cross He prayed: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). Are we to conclude, then, that the Son has less power or is of a lesser order than the Father? To claim this would be to deny the full deity of Christ as clearly taught in Scripture! We must remember that when Christ spoke of the Father being greater it was during His incarnation on earth. This is an expression of the amazing truth of the incarnation as described by Paul in Philippians 2:6-11. During His life on earth Christ humbled Himself and "made Himself nothing". He, who was God in very nature, poured Himself out into the form of a human being, limiting the expression of His glory (veiling it in flesh as the hymn-writer put it), and restricting the expression of His divine power to the limitations of a body. As He lived on earth He felt hunger, pain and thirst. He needed to rest, sleep and eat. He could only be physically present in one place at one time. Although He was aware of the thoughts and motives of people and knew what was happening at a distance from Him, and He could perform miracles, He

accepted many limitations. His intrinsic power and glory did not leave Him, but He voluntarily restricted them. Therefore, it was true that the Father was greater than He. Not only so, but during His incarnation Christ accepted the position of a servant. He subjected Himself to the Father, although He was by nature His equal, and followed the Father's will, obeying and speaking His words. Barrett has expressed this truth: "the Father is God sending and commanding, the Son is God sent and obedient." So, as one commentary puts it, when Christ spoke these words, "His present position on earth was less than the Father's glorified position in heaven. It was part of the mission of Jesus to accept an inferior position." In doing this Christ modeled perfect humanity. Man cannot live without God – our existence is intended to be one of constant dependence on, obedience to and relationship with the Father! It is a struggle of our rebellious, independent, "rights" obsessed nature that we cannot grasp that to make oneself a servant does not necessarily mean that one is less valued, of less worth or inferior to the one we serve. In the person of Christ, the incarnate Son, there is no such pride. He shows us that dependence is not degrading, meekness is not weakness, and humility is not humiliation. To accomplish redemption Christ had to become human, and to become human by its very nature was to become dependent, for we do not have life in isolation from the Father!

So, then, through Christ the relationship within the trinity is extended to embrace us. This is what Christ says in verses 20 and 21. After His resurrection, when He has appeared to them through the Holy Spirit (v20) they will finally realize the intimacy of the relationship He has with His Father, but more than that, they to have that same intimacy in relationship to Him, and because of this with the Father. These relationships are bound together by mutual love, so that those who love Christ are loved by the Father and by Christ, and will know Christ. One of the most profound truths of the Christian gospel is that Christ, through His perfect humanity and the one act of obedience in His sacrificial death as our representative lifted humanity so that we have a new relationship with God (see also Romans 5:12-19, Hebrews 2:9-15). In verse 23 Christ declares the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophetic home when He says of those who love and obey Him that "My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with Him". The Christian life, then, is a relationship with God as Father through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour and by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

A personal relationship – true discipleship

What is true discipleship? It is the out-working of that relationship we have just described. Christ is quite direct as He defines discipleship in these verses, and He introduces two key principles: love and obedience. These two are central to what it means to be a disciple of Christ (commonly known as a "Christian"), but what is the relationship between the two? In verse 15 Christ states it simply: "If you love me, you will obey what I command". In verse 24 we have the corollary of this: "He who does not love me will not obey my teaching". There is a dangerous tendency among Christians to separate the idea of loving Christ from obeying Him. We speak as if it is possible to have Him as Saviour but not as Lord – to receive all of the benefits He gives (salvation, peace, joy, hope, Heaven) but not to surrender our lives to His control. So, it is possible for a person to "become a Christian" but for their life not to change because they haven't yet learnt to make Christ Lord. The Scriptures know nothing of this false division. To receive Christ as Saviour means to receive Him as Lord. A Christian is someone who loves and obeys Christ. They may fall or fail at times but there will be the evidence in their life of that obedience that flows from their loving relationship with the Master. We cannot claim to know Christ if we are not serious about obeying Him. Of course, His commands (v21) first and foremost refers to the new command of 13:34, but at v26 makes clear it is more than that – it includes "everything I have said to you". This obedience is no slavery or compulsion but a willing surrender to the One we love and whose love has transformed us. It is only possible through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, and we discover that as we surrender to Him and seek God's will, so He gives the power to do God's works. The relationship with Christ is one that gives life as we are united with Him – because He lives, so we too live (v19).

The expression of relationship – the New Covenant Community

And so, as we individually have this intimate relationship with God through Christ we become a community of God's people – one family with one father. We are the people of God in whom He can make His home – the fulfillment of the prophets' hopes. Through the Holy Spirit resident in us we are the dwelling place of God. The New Covenant says: "No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest" (Hebrews :11). And how is this possible? Because there is finally a solution for sin through Christ and God can also say: "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Hebrews 8:12). And so the Lord continues to write His laws on our hearts and put them in our minds by the work of the Holy Spirit who indwells us! It is no wonder, then, that the New Covenant Community, the Church, will be marked by love for one another after the pattern of the incarnate Servant God.

Holy Spirit – person & ministry

The relationship we have with Christ does not only revolutionise our relationships with others – it also transforms our relationship with our inner self as the Holy Spirit comes to live in us. The gospel is not simply a sociological phenomenon, it is the power of God to redeem and transform sinful people, and this is mediated by the Holy Spirit. This passage contains great truths about the Holy Spirit. We can learn much about His person and ministry by considering the names given to Him here and the blessings He brings to the believer.

HIS NAMES

1. Another Counsellor (vv16, 26)

Jesus tells the disciples that He will ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit to them (v16) and that the Father will send Him in His name (v26). The word translated “counsellor” in the NIV (Greek *paraklētos*) can have a number of meanings. Outside the New Testament it usually has legal connotations, and this also appears to be the case in the only other New Testament usage in I John 2:1 where it refers to Christ as the “one who speaks to the Father in our defence”. The verbal form of the word is more common in the New Testament and is variously translated “exhort”, “comfort”, “entreat”, “encourage”. The core meaning of *paraklētos* is literally “one called alongside to help”, and suggested translations for the word in these verses are:

1. Advocate (one who speaks on your behalf, like a lawyer) – in this sense the Spirit both represents Christ to us and represents us to God.
2. Advisor – the One who gives us important advice in difficult situations (this is closest to the NIV word “counsellor”)
3. Comforter – meaning not just someone who sympathises with us, but one who strengthens and enables to be brave

It is impossible to say which exact nuance Christ means here, and it seems at least possible that He used this word because all three ideas are implicit. Certainly we can testify that the Spirit fulfils all three roles for us. However, it is probably more important to notice that Christ describes Him as “another” counsellor. Jesus is the Wonderful Counsellor of Isaiah’s prophecy (Isaiah 9:6), and He has been to the disciples their advocate, advisor and comforter. Now that He is leaving them, the Spirit will perform His function. He will fulfil every function for the Church that Christ fulfilled for the twelve during His earthly ministry. Because of Him they will not be like orphans, but will continue to know the constant presence and help of Christ with them.

2. The Spirit of Truth (v17)

Christ is the Truth (14:6), and the Spirit is the Spirit of Truth. He is to be contrasted with other spirits who are spirits of deception and lies (Satan is the “father of lies” – John 8:44). He never deceives or misleads, but always leads believers into a deeper understanding of truth. He brings wholeness to our personality.

3. The Holy Spirit (v26)

Sometimes because we are so used to calling Him the Holy Spirit we forget the importance of this description. He is the Spirit of holiness. His mission is always to promote holiness and to bring us to increasing Christ-likeness.

HIS BLESSINGS

1. He indwells the believer (v17)

Although the concept of the Holy Spirit is not new to the New Testament, the promise of the indwelling Spirit is a new kind of relationship. In the Old Testament, the Spirit is active in creation (Genesis 1:2), speaking to people who sinned against God (Genesis 6:3), calling and anointing God’s people in a special way for service during a specific period of time (Judges 3:10; 13:24-25; 14:6, 19; 15:14), and giving God’s word through prophecy (Zechariah 7:12). This is seen many times as God worked through His people, but there was no guarantee that the Spirit would remain with a person, so that David could pray “Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.” (Psalm 51:11). The Spirit did not make His dwelling place with God’s people. John the Baptist predicted that Jesus would baptise people with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11, Mark 1:8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33). Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about the work of the Spirit (John 3:5) and spoke about the future coming of the Spirit using the picture of streams of living water flowing from within the believer (John 7:38&39), but it is now as He prepares the disciples for His departure that He reveals to the disciples that the Church will be marked by a new kind of relationship with the Spirit. Under the New Covenant, as we saw above, God’s dwelling place is with us (Jeremiah 31:34 and Ezekiel 37:27), and this is mediated by the Spirit. The believer in Christ (who loves and obeys Him) is

indwelt by the Spirit. What an immense privilege we have as believers in Christ, that the Spirit lives in us, and will not leave us – He will be with us forever (v16) – and that He brings intimacy with the Father and the Son (v23).

2. He gives power to glorify God by doing His will (vv12-14)

In verses 12-14 we saw Jesus' amazing promise that those who believe in Him will do even greater things than He did. We suggested that this refers to the scope of the spread of the gospel as the work of Christ is multiplied by the numbers of those who believe in Him. The power that He promised is to glorify God by doing the will of God. It is the Holy Spirit who makes this possible.

3. He supports the believer in obedience to Christ's command (v21-24)

Although Christ does not explicitly say this, it is clear from the context that the Counsellor will be a help to the believer, and that this must include obedience to the command of Christ. We cannot live in a way that honours God without the enabling power of the Spirit.

4. He teaches the believer (v26)

Because He is the Spirit of Truth the Spirit will lead the believer into truth. The promise that He will "teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said" may not apply to all believers – certainly the part about reminding us cannot apply to those of us who did not hear Jesus teaching. It may be that this promise is specific to the apostles and fore-shadows their inspired writings. However, it is true that the Spirit can help us to remember the words of Scripture and to understand them as we study.

5. He will bring Christ's peace to the believer (v27)

Again, Christ does not explicitly say that the Spirit brings His peace to the believer, but in the context of the passage it is not a stretch to say that this is implied. The Spirit is the One who guards our hearts as we trust in Christ.

The Community and the World

This passage also teaches us important truths about the relationship between the world and the New Covenant Community. The "world" describes the sphere of human society that does not know and is hostile to God. There are several important facts here, each of which explains why the relationship between the Church and the world will inevitably be an uneasy one:

1. The World cannot accept the Spirit (v17)

The world cannot accept the Spirit (v17) – in fact it denies His very existence. Christ will return to this theme in 15:18-16:4, but here He warns the disciples that as the world has not accepted Him (John 1:11), it will not accept the Spirit. Judas cannot understand why Christ would only show Himself to the believers and not to the world (v22) – the appearing Christ spoke of in verses 18&19 may refer to His appearances to the disciples after His resurrection or to the coming of the Holy Spirit – but Christ does not answer this question. Perhaps we need to realise that the key issue in bringing the world to believe in Christ is not evidence but a spiritual battle. We need to take every thought captive to Christ and to be involved in apologetics – arguing the case for God, Christ and faith with the world – but because of spiritual blindness no one will enter the Kingdom through logic. The witness to the world is to be through the Church, not through the world seeing Christ, and when Christ appeared after His resurrection it was only to those who believed in Him. I am reminded of the story Jesus told about the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). The rich man, in Hell, wanted Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his family, but Abraham said: "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead". Those who are spiritually blind cannot see, and a sceptical world would find an alternative "natural" explanation for even the most remarkable miracle. One only needs to read or listen to the words of Richard Dawkins, the prophet of Evolution to see this blindness in action. It should not surprise us as Christians that we will often feel uneasy in this world as if we don't belong.

2. Christ's peace is different from the world's (v27)

In verse 27 Christ says that He is leaving His peace with the disciples, but that he gives it in a different way than the world. Barclay defines this peace beautifully: "In the Bible the word *peace*, *shalom*, never simply means the absence of trouble. Peace means everything which makes for our highest good. The peace which the world offers us is the peace of escape, the peace which comes from the avoidance of trouble the peace which comes from refusing to face things. The peace which Jesus offers is the peace of conquest. It is the peace which no experience in life can ever take from us. It is the peace which no sorrow, no danger, no suffering can make less. It is the peace which is

independent of outward circumstances”. This is the peace that Paul speaks of in Philippians 4:7 – peace that passes understanding. The best the world can do is to try to remove conflict and strife, but Christ’s peace is not the absence of trouble – it is absolute confidence and stillness in the face of opposition and trouble. Christ Himself was facing the most painful of experiences in His impending crucifixion, yet He had such confidence in His Father’s purposes that He had peace. We can have peace in a troubled world because we have that same faith in God’s purposes and the constant presence of the indwelling Spirit.

3. The prince of this world is our enemy (v30)

In verse 30 Christ brings the spiritual struggle between the world and the Spirit into focus as He reveals that the “prince of this world” (Satan) is the enemy of God’s purpose. Satan was on the move, plotting and working towards the crucifixion. He was inspiring Judas (13:2), and presumably the other movers in the plot to kill Jesus. Yet, Jesus was adamant that Satan had no power over Him. The crucifixion was a voluntary act of sacrifice by Christ in obedience to His Father and for the benefit of His disciples. Satan, presumably, could not see the plan of God behind the cross, but in that darkest hour the most glorious victory was won! Satan has great influence in the unbelieving world of man, and we often miss the extent of His power, yet in comparison with Christ He has no power at all. The Church will be victorious over the enemy because Christ won the victory at the cross. We must carry on the fight in his name and in His power.

4. The world must learn that the Son is obedient (v31)

Christ must display to the world that there is a greater way and that in obedience to His Father He will demonstrate His love for the Father, and so Christ will be obedient. The little community will now leave the upper room and cross the Kidron Valley towards the Garden of Gethsemane.

Conclusion

In one sense both Jo Coudert (who called us to depend on our relationship to ourselves) and Sidney Madwed (who claimed that relationships with others were most essential) had wisdom to impart. We are desperately in need of greater self-acceptance and a correct view of who we really are, and we desperately need to be accepted and valued by others. However, what they missed is that the central need we have can never be met in self or others, but can only ultimately be met in relationship to Christ. That relationship is a living one which transforms our very inner being as the Holy Spirit becomes resident in us. He brings peace, purpose and wholeness to our inner self, and He empowers us to love and serve others in a sacrificial way. Through Him we discover grace and become fountains of grace to others. This relationship can never end – our life is united with Christ – and furthermore, as we are united through Christ with the New Covenant Community we discover a new depth of relationship to others that will also last eternally. These are much more than the indulgent, exclusive relationships romantic songs and movies lead us to expect – they are other-centred, inclusive relationships that model the very nature of the God-head and restore Kingdom values to a world that desperately needs to see them. In Christ we find the one relationship that we all need, and so all people – single or married, parents or not, widowed and divorced can find a new purpose in living.