

## CHRIST'S FAREWELL

### John 14-17

John shares a vivid and moving account of Christ's last days with his closest disciples before his arrest and crucifixion in chapters 14-17 of his gospel. Contextually, 14:1-4 sets the tone for the overall text. Jesus is concerned about the fallout of the events that are about to take place—specifically how it will affect these men. He seeks to comfort them and to offer guidance. Big changes are coming. He wants them to be prepared and ready. In these four verses he urges trust, shares a glimpse into future glory and assures them of their participation in it—just not yet. In the meantime, challenges are ahead; work is to be done; and they are the ones called to do it. He must continue to prepare them in the short time he has remaining with them. This is the occasion of John 14-17 and here are some of his points of emphasis.

**The Father-Son Connection** (14:5-14): John captures Jesus emphasizing this all throughout his gospel. It is one of the main threads that run throughout his account of Christ's life. Jesus doubles-down in these chapters on making it clear that he is all about doing the will of the Father. In fact, the only way to the Father is through Jesus. Their goals are the same. No one can believe in one and not believe in the other. They are in perfect sync and are in essence one (17:21). Whatever is asked in the name of the Son is basically asked of the Father and will result in blessings—for them as they go about continuing to serve. Jesus did not want to leave any doubt as to their mission being an extension of his own and it all being about the will of the Father. No room for second guessing here—for them or for us.

**Obedience is Vital** (14:15-15:18): Radical change was coming for his disciples. Their world was about to be turned upside down. They were about to witness their rabbi; their master; their Lord die on a cross and all that would follow that. During this crucial time and beyond they would need to stick with the plan, that is, to unwaveringly continue in the teachings of Jesus. They would need to obey regardless of what was going on around them. Remembering and doing what he taught them would be vital to them accomplishing their kingdom work and commission. Discipleship flows from relationship—the vine and the branches—there is a strong, strong connection here. This is why Christ spent over three years with these men—to prepare them. He makes the connection also between obedience and love—again speaking in terms of relationship. He promises that they will not be alone (more on that later) and assures them that these events are all a part of the Father's plan, which he is obeying. So as he obeys, he desires his disciples, his friends, to obey—out of love, so they will be prepared.

**Tough Times are Ahead** (15:18-16:4): He speaks to them in terms of being hated and about being persecuted. Just as the world pushed back on him, they will push back on his disciples. While this was nothing new to Christ, it would be for them particularly in light of Christ's absence. This is why obedience was vital. To help them, Jesus presented them the kingdom perspective of chosenness—being chosen out of the world to bless the world. Understanding this (see also 18:36) would enable them to endure and frame their ministry in a different light—as it will us today.

**Help is on the Way** (16:5-33). The good news is that they would not have to endure the challenges alone. Christ may be leaving but the Comforter, the Counselor; the Holy Spirit was coming as an ever-present guide and strength for them. He would empower and enable them for their work ahead. Most assuredly the disciples did not fully understand these statements in this moment, but by Acts 2 they would. Their inability to understand is captured in the dialogue between them and Christ in this section. They remained clueless as to what was about to happen. Jesus continues to reassure them however. They will have the ability to ask and expect God's continued help. Finally some light appears in their fog leading Jesus to proclaim, "you believe at last!" This may seem like a late date for such a proclamation, but Christ discipling them was a process, which would be continued and enhanced by the Spirit. In all of these ways they too, would overcome the world. We continue to enjoy the blessings of the Spirit—indwelling us; empowering us; and enabling us to continue to do the will of the Father. And in this manner, we also can be assured of overcoming the world.

**Jesus Prays** (17:1-26): First for his disciples—he is well aware of what they are about to face. He asks for protection, joy and sanctification for them. He also asks for unity—the kind of unity he and the Father personify. This, of course, was another essential component they would need in order to endure and accomplish their mission. This unity flowing from the Father-Son connection defined by love, confirmed in obedience, and empowered by the Spirit would stand as a grand witness to the world of who and whose they were. It would also guard against the trouble to come as well as strengthening them to endure it. It was a living extension of the Father-Son relationship to them. They like, Christ, were doing the will of the Father and the resulting unity—especially displayed in the midst of opposition—would clearly demonstrate that their mission was not of this world, but from another place. No amount of pressure was going to break them, break their union with one another and with heaven. This is where Jesus wanted them to arrive—and where they did eventually. Unity remains incredibly essential for all of these reasons and more. A divided church cannot give witness to the love of God; cannot demonstrate obedience to the Father; quenches the Spirit of God; will not stay on mission in ministry; will fail to faithfully live out discipleship; and is ill prepared to face any pushback from an unbelieving world.

The passion of Christ is seen in this section of Scripture. His love for his disciples is evident. Unlike them, he knew what was next and it can be felt in the text. As he verbalizes his astonishing care and concern for those closest to him, we should also take heart. This is how he feels about us. His desires expressed to them remain his desires for us. We have access to the same promises and Spirit. We have been called to similar mission and ministry. The world around us hasn't really changed that much—still remains growing opposition to the will of the Father. So then, there remains the vital need for discipleship, obedience, love, and unity among us.

In the midst of it all—"Do not let your heart be troubled."