

Christ: the Way, the Truth, and the Life

John 14.

G. V. Wigram.

I think, if you study the Gospel by John, you will find it is taken for granted in John 11 that the Jews would not have Him. He, the Son of God, brings in the doctrine of resurrection; in John 12 there is a flitting across the earth of His various glories — Son of man and Son of David. Then John 13 and 14 form a little compartment by themselves. Chap. 13 gives a most amazing display of the Christ Jesus, when the time was come for the Paschal Lamb. He takes the ground of knowing all about the saints up to the present time. So you and I have a standing in chap 13, seeing the Lord prepares us for all the evil that has taken place on the earth. Chap. 14 is in strong contrast to chap. 13. *There* He knew everything about the men down here; now about the Father up there. This extends from vers. 1-20, and from ver. 21 to the end. He speaks and acts as the One who knew everything about His saints, and what would alone make them happy down here. He is bringing out all the amazing truth about "Abba," and how it is to be learnt; and that it is the word for *us*.

In the first chapter then of this Gospel we find a remarkable testimony of the Spirit of God to the higher glory of the Son, as the only-begotten Son of the Father, ver. 14; and then in ver. 18, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." There is this contrast between the two verses: in ver. 14 it is Himself presented as the Word made flesh; but what shines out, because it is seen to be in Him, is this glory of the Father. "We beheld His glory;" not merely Messiah presented with all the promises, but in the adorable Person of the Lord there was a glory that surpassed altogether the glory for the earth, whether as promised to Abraham or to David, "The glory as of the only-begotten Son" of the Father. Then in ver. 16 He speaks of our receiving out of His fulness grace for grace. In ver. 18 we see what the great object of the Lord was in coming into the world. It was not merely that He had the light in Him, but He "declared the Father"; He told God out. The word translated "declared" has a particular force and meaning. He was the perfect presentation of the Father. In the Lord Jesus I get all about the Father. Any one whose eyes were opened saw in Him the Father, and Himself the Son of the Father.

In John 14 He takes the place of teaching them something more in detail about Him; and the way. He approaches the subject is remarkable, and shows His grace. When He got to talk about the Father, neither Thomas, nor Philip, nor Jude could make out what it was all about; but He approaches the subject in a very beautiful way, by bringing the Place belonging to the Father before them. He says, "If I go away, I am going to a place where My presence is needed to make it ready for you"; so He brings in this thought of the Father in that way to them, in connection with the place.

But oh! what was in the heart of Christ at that time, with all the sorrows pressing upon Him connected with the place He was going into as sin-bearer, as being the one forsaken of God — to bring before the cavillings of His disciples that He knew all about the Father? He displays His knowledge about the Father; He was going to the Father, and He was going to prepare a place for them there. Do you know the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is up there in glory, connects you individually (if you are believers in Him) with Abba, Father? Where was the first thought of "sonship" found? If I say, "The Father," you say, "Well, I understand that, because I am one of His children." It is very blessed to say this, but more blessed to say, "That Father had one only Son, and He deputed Him to bring many sons to glory. The only-begotten Son is the One to whom, He committed it to bring many sons to glory."

I suppose I may be bold to say, beloved, that never does a single child of God occupy the mind of

the Lord Jesus but His mind approaches him, as taking him up in connection with His Father, who gave them to Him. The Lord Jesus, if He looks upon me as a son of God, says, "Well, poor thing, My Father gave you to Me; and in you I see the estimate of My Father's thought of the worth of My blood, in your blessing and acceptance of Me." Is this your thought when you say, Abba, Father? The Father thinks of the blessedness of having such a Son as that Son was and is; and of that Son to enlarge the circle, bringing us in. He knew me as one the Father had given to Him. I was a child of wrath once, as others, and am now brought home to enjoy, and live to, God. I had nothing to bring to God and Christ in their holiness but my sins; and He has taken them all away, and given a stab to my selfishness; and yet something far better than that — Christ looks upon me as one in whom He sees His Father's estimate of His work. He thinks, "There is a man that I have plucked out of the world that belongs to Satan — there is a man that is to be led by Me into the Father's house."

So He introduces the subject here. "I am going away, and where am I going? Well, My Father has got a house in heaven, and you could not be there; but I am the beginning of the creation of God Myself; I shall get there; and once there, the place will be ready for you." If you think of all God's glory, the light and the brilliancy — if I think of the house which the Lord has made ready for me, I say, "What a blessed place, for my Lord will be there! not to do a work, but as the One in His Father's house." The Lord will be up there at home, and you and I will find out what makes it a home; and this is, His own self in the place.

Then He goes on to show what His own personal love is to the people He will come to fetch. He says, "I shall not do a work in the house, and send some one else to fetch you there — no, *I* shall do it." "I shall come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." "I shall want you to be with Me."

When He got to this point, He had made the first step in His subject. Then He enters on what is His subject. He says, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." He knew right well what the effect of His saying it would be. He was right in what He said; and what was He looking at? He was looking at the Spirit which was inseparably connected with them. There was a good deal more knowledge than they had any idea of. Thomas thought he had caught the Lord saying something inconsistent. "We cannot know where You are going until You tell us; how can we know the way? We cannot, until You tell us where You are going; for who can tell the way to any place whose name has not been mentioned?"

Just one word in connection with that as a practical point. You and I ought to receive things because Christ says them, not because we understand them. Take an instance of this. Suppose I had been with the Lord Jesus in John 5, and heard Him say, "He that heareth my word, and believeth [on] him that sent me, hath everlasting life." I might have done one or two things on hearing that word. I might have said "I know nothing about that word, eternal life, and therefore can form no judgment at all as to what its introduction depends on; "or else," Here is a Person who knows all about it, and He says, If any man believes God, he has the blessing." Which of the two is the wise man? He is talking about what *He* understands; and I receive it, What is the consequence? He says, "Hath everlasting life," and He also takes the other side, "Shall not come into condemnation." What Thomas ought to have done was not to have judged the words of his Master. He was only bandying words with the Lord. Surely, instead of saying what he did, he ought to have asked, "Well, Lord, and what next?" and thus taken the place of a learner. It makes a wonderful difference whether we take the place of being receivers from Him, or the place of being able to judge of what He says.

The Lord then takes another step, and He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." The Lord

Jesus Christ is presented down here on earth as the One who could say of Himself, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Philip had said, "show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Jesus says, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?"

Before I go on to follow that out, I would remark that there are three things presented here. First, Himself "as the way" to the Father (not to God, this is in Hebrews), which you will find extends to the end of ver. 15. Secondly, having spoken of Himself as "the truth," He opens it out in vers. 16, 17, 18. Then as "the life," He shows this out in vers. 19, 20. These verses are a kind of divine commentary by the Lord about Himself as "the way, the truth, and the life."

Jesus said to Philip, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me?" etc. The human mind often makes great difficulties *for itself* on this subject — difficulties that do not exist. People have often said to me, "I do not like that word Trinity; I do not see how there can be three in one, and one in three." My answer is very simple: "I have no particular love for the *word*, yet I have a particular love for the truth which men have coined that word to represent, though I cannot say I understand it." Very often learned men have gone entirely wrong upon it, and simple men too. There are certain landmarks laid down in scripture. I remember an essay by a man who was thought most highly of, which speaks of the Trinity as being three different forms in which the one person is spoken of. My simple answer is, that I find at, the baptism of Christ all three together. The *Father* was saying, "This is my beloved Son;" the *Son* coming out of the water; and the *Spirit* descends on Him. That meets the question entirely.

A person says he wants to understand the how and why of it! Let me take a point nearer myself. I am spirit, soul, and body. If I were only a spirit I should not be a man, but rather an angel. Do I doubt the fact? No. Do I know the why or the how? Not a bit. I believe, if my body were killed tonight, my spirit would go to Jesus; but my body may stay in the grave as Stephen's has. Can I understand the how of it. Certainly not. I see a doctor often has a resource: he can arouse the body by appealing to the mind; through the mind he arouses the body. I do not understand it; but am I going to sit in inquest over it? Here are three Persons in one — can I understand God? Certainly not. As you read the pages of Scripture, they show that He is God, and. you. are man. If I cannot understand it, is it any wonder? Do I understand myself? Certainly not. Abraham's body will rise, and Abraham's soul and spirit will dwell in that body: is it then for me to ask how? Certainly not.

If you take the name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, it was new. Israel had known something of the Spirit and the name of Messiah, but never as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. If I think of the blessed Lord as a Babe laid in a manger, or a Man standing in the water, can I say there was not a direct line of connection between Him and the Father? A man is a fool that argues upon this question ! Every work of Christ was fully done in co-operation with His Father: there was a real connection between them that none but God could understand.

When the Lord was speaking in this way to Thomas, first of all saying, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also," I suppose He was referring to that hidden union which but one eye could trace. Yet Philip says, "Now do show us the Father: then it will be all plain!" Smart words from a fool! He was talking about things he did not understand. It is my wisdom to take the place of being a learner: it would have been wisdom for Philip to have said "We wait to hear a little more about this;" but his mind brought forth, as ours do, very foolish things. "show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Christ knew better than Philip about it. He knew that, if Philip could have been present in glory, it would not have been pleasant to him.

God put all His glory in the Son of man, as being a vessel or lamp fit to show it forth. He put it

into the Lord Jesus. What an exquisite dealing on the part of the Father! The Lord does not tell us about Himself. He says, "Do you know, have you heard, about a Man dwelling upon earth who is called Jesus? have you seen His works, marked His words? Well, in all these you see Me; I am in the Father."

Man could not meet God without a mediator. I am not afraid. to draw near and study Abba's character in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" It was a hidden union between Him and God the Father. We could not trace the union between the two Persons in the Godhead, but the Lord Jesus put it out to be received in simplicity.

I have the grace of the Lord in this chap. 14. He must get down upon a lower testimony (ver. 10). There were certain words and works. He drops the other question for the present, and descends to words. and works. "Who wrought these words and works in me? What do you think of them?" If they would not receive them, they were denying His place as servant. He would not say His own words and works: "The Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works." All my works I work in fellowship with my Father. Those works that you saw, did they bring you to Abba, or to myself? There were certain works: whom did they bring you to? Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works' sake. A person says, How can it be? You are simply to receive "that I am in the Father, and the Father in me." Nothing could be plainer than ver. 11.

What do I understand by "abiding in the Son"? Never a thought or an action ought to flow from me, save as one actually hidden in the Lord Jesus Christ. I never think of God the Father having anything to say to me, apart from my being in Christ. My place is to be hidden in the Son, and to abide in Him. I am to be seen as a person inside Christ, never a bit of me to appear outside; to be seen by God according to His thoughts of the person of Christ, who had to come here to show out the ways of the Father. He says, That is what my words and works have been." He that believeth on me, the works that I do, shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." "See the sort of love I have towards you for the Father's sake." While the Father has given Me words and works, I mean to work in you down here; and there will be greater works done by you than by Me because I go unto My Father." I suppose in all simplicity, that this refers to the beginning of Acts. There we see one hundred and twenty left as the result of His work, gathered in an upper room; but on the day of Pentecost, when Peter was speaking, there were three thousand brought in at once. It was from Jesus glorified at God's right hand, "He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." Most remarkable that anybody should be converted through a man like Peter, and most marvellous that there should be at most but some hundreds (1 Cor. 15: 6) through Christ's ministry! It was through the gift of the Holy Ghost; the Spirit had come to testify through them.

The next step He takes here is a most remarkable token of His identity with His Father in practical affection. Ver. 13, He says to them, "When you get into any difficulty, just come in My name, and pour it out, and see if I do not answer." "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." What does this say to our hearts, beloved friends.? Whatever you fear, take it in. I have certain things on my heart; I go in and ask God for them, and the petitions are granted me, because. they were asked in Christ's name. Another time I draw near burdened, and do not know what I want; but there is Christ up there, who looks down and sees the thing that I need, and He says, "I will give it for My Father's sake." He sits there until there are no more children to be gathered, and then He rises up — the expression of His Father's mind still.

My thoughts have been led a good deal into this subject in this verse. if I say to a child, "What do you know about your father?" he would answer very sharply, as the child of a friend did to me as to what his was, and so on. "But what do you know about him?" The child thinks he knows all about his

father and yet, when you come to the point, what he puts forth is very little indeed. You will find he has got what appears to me a very defective answer. I am a son in the same family in which the Lord Jesus Christ is the First-born among many brethren. I say this presents the Father's thoughts and mind; I want to have an answer that will bear the test of that presence. If a person says "What do you know about Abba?" I say, "Well I do know a little about the Lord Jesus Christ, and in everything that I do know, I find the Father presented. Everything that He does presents the Father's thoughts and mind." This throws the whole question upon my knowledge of a certain Person, in whom the Father was revealed — who came into the world to declare Him.

In Eph. 3 we read, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Suppose I address myself to a poor illiterate person, and say, "What do you know about Christ?" If that person is walking near to Christ, Christ is dwelling in his heart by faith. There is all the fulness of the Godhead bodily presented in Christ there. I can quite understand that if you said to many simple souls, "Are you filled into all the fulness of God?" they would say, "Oh no!" If you say, "Have you much to do with the Lord Jesus Christ?" they would say, "Blessed be His name, I have nothing else!" If Christ dwells in your heart by faith, you *are* filled into all the fulness of God.

Just take up one instance out of many, as an illustration of the truth before us, the Person of the Lord and His words and works as presenting God, John 4. He comes into the world thirsting for poor sinners, and He goes off down to Samaria, because He knows a certain poor woman is there whom He is to bless. First of all, He spreads out the various beauties in Himself, and the water He had to give her; but she cannot understand Him. Then He steps off the divine side of the question, and gets on the ground of her *conscience*, saying, "Go, call thy husband." She says, "I have got no husband." No, quite true," He says, "you have no husband." . . . Oh, dear me," she says, "there is that question about worship; where is the place for it?" "Poor thing!" He says, "My Father is seeking worshippers — who shall worship Him in spirit and in truth; He has sent His own Son into the world to look for such " — Christ speaking the thoughts of God and doing His works. She answers Him again. Well," she says, "if you bring your knowledge forward in this way, I know something; when Messiah cometh, He will tell us all things." Jesus said, "I that speak to thee am He." She goes off just in the line of His thoughts. She says, "I have found You out; You have no heart to condemn me: I will serve your turn." So she fetched out the poor Samaritan sinners. "Ah," they say, "your tidings brought us out; and we have found, not merely Messiah, but the Saviour of the world." The Lord takes up that; when the disciples come back, He says, "Do you not see that the fields are white already to harvest? " His work was to accomplish what was in the mind of the Father to *gather* out those who should worship Him, not at Jerusalem or Samaria, but in spirit and in truth.

If you look through this Gospel of John, you will find in every scene something that gives you knowledge of Abba.

There is a wonderful difference in the feelings of the human mind. I might say, "I know the Lord Jesus and I would go anywhere to meet Him; I would go into the light, though it is very strong." A very different thing to say, "I know the Lord Jesus, and in whatever form He has presented the Father to me, there is nothing to terrify me in the thought of going into His presence." When I see Christ on the tree, I see Him as God's Sin-offering — God's Lamb. Am I afraid to meet God, who sent His Son to bear my sins on the tree? If that is God, I am prepared to meet Him. I do not want to send forward a messenger: He has sent a messenger to me. "I have sent My Son to bear your sins on the cross." I shall not think about the light, however bright that light may be; I shall only think about the God who receives any one who comes through Christ, though they may have dipped their hands in His blood.

Whoever thought of such a thing as the Father seeking those who should worship Him in spirit and in truth? He wanted people to share in the admiration that ever dwells in the heart of the Son about Himself. The Son is perfectly delighted with the Father. All presented in the Son showed the Father's desire to have those who could enjoy Him in their measure. If you have received eternal life, has it never struck you what a blessed person is revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ? He has a Father whose heart is wholly set upon Him. I have "fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ," — fellowship with them, not merely with things belonging to them. I can say, "The throne cannot be shaken." I bless God that there is that throne; but having all things in heaven is not like having the *Person*. I can think of the Father's thoughts about Christ: when I think of Christ standing before the throne, I can rejoice in everything in heaven.

It is an important thing to read the Father in the Son, to read Him in all the ways common to both; in His subjection as a Servant, in the words He spoke and the works He wrought, so that Abba will be no stranger to you. "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works." There is the truth and the life"; just see how He makes it good for the believer. If you believe, you have got Abba's love perfectly declared in Christ's words, works and sufferings.

"And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of *truth*." Who is the truth? Christ. What is my connection with Him? The Spirit of truth dwells in me. He is a *Guardian*. Christ is our Paraclete up there; the Holy Ghost is our Paraclete down here. When Christ went away, He sent another Paraclete. I have One up there, and One down here. He says, "I have charged myself with all the people of God: if any man sin, he shall not lose the blessing; I am yet there to renew his communion with the Father." Here He sends the Paraclete, who charges Himself with the care of the people down here. It is not a Comforter merely; but like a man who takes charge of an orphan family, He takes the whole management of them. When the Holy Ghost charged Himself with these souls, He took the whole responsibility of them. He rebukes and corrects, as well as comforts. He does everything for them that Christ would do for them down here. We have a Guardian up there who advocates our cause, and we have a Guardian who charges Himself with all our concerns down here. Mark the sort of knowledge you and I ought to have about the truth, if the Spirit of truth is dwelling in us. "At that day ye shall *know* that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." We ought to know all about Him, as far as Scripture reveals Him up there, and all about His tomorrow, when He comes forth in glory. Let me ask you if you know all about Him? I am afraid, in that respect we are very much behind hand.

Then at last when the Lord speaks about the life: how beautiful! how unsearchable! how it makes one feel that the things of the Lord must be received by faith! "Because I live, ye shall live also." I say to myself, "Does Christ live?" "Yes, without question." "Do I live?" "Yes, because Christ lives." He does not leave me there only. Is He in the Father? He is. There is that unity between Him and the Father that comes from unity of being. Scripture tells me He is in the Father, and I am by grace in Him. The wise men of the world say I am a fool if I believe it.

I remember speaking, thirty years ago, of the truth in the Epistle to the Ephesians. Some one came up to me afterwards and said, "You must excuse me; but what you have been saying is contrary to common sense. I cannot be in two places at once." I replied, "You must settle that with the Lord. If He says so, I would rather deny my being down here than deny my being up there." Where is He? In the Father. Where am I? In Him. This is connected with the life. "And ye in me."

Then there is another thing. "And I am in you." There are two Scriptures I might refer to in

connection with it, — Christ dwelling in my heart by faith, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in me to the end of time. If I am filled with the Spirit, I know Christ is in me, dwelling in my heart by faith. Look at it quietly; ask yourself. whether there ever was a Person who knew all about the Father, — who was so happy to stoop down and talk to such stupid things as you and me; so that, if you knew Christ, you knew the Father, for He is the very image — He declared Him. Abba will be as familiar to you as the Lord Jesus Christ down here. He says, "You have now Abba's love passing through Me down to where you are. Now that I am going up to God you will see His love coming down to you where your feet are walking here, if you only simply understand what I am as declaring the Father. You want to know what connection you have with the truth? I shall be up there, and the Spirit of truth will be in you, and directly He comes into you, He will cry, 'Abba, Father.' Then about the life, take Me as an expression of it. I shall be in the Father up there, and you in Me, and I in you." What could He say more?

As to my life, it is not the privilege I am thinking about, but the reality of you and me possessing life come down from the Father. This life which is Christ in us, is it governing our lives down here? Are we walking down here as He walked? To me it is unspeakable blessing.

G. V. W.