

Chapter 14 Excursus #1:
My Father's House

"For eighteen centuries [these verses] have been peculiarly dear to Christ's believing servants in every part of the world. Many are the sick rooms which they have lightened! Many are the dying hearts which they have cheered! Let us see what they contain. ...

"We have ... in this passage *a very comfortable account of heaven, or the future abode of saints*. It is but little that we understand about heaven while we are here in the body, and that little is generally taught us in the Bible by negatives much more than positives. But here, at any rate, there are some plain things.

"Heaven is 'a Father's house,' -the house of that God of whom Jesus says, 'I go to my Father, and your Father.' It is, in a word, home: the home of Christ and Christians. This is a sweet and touching expression. Home, as we all know, is the place where we are generally loved for our own sakes, and not for our gifts or possessions; the place where we are loved to the end, never forgotten, and always welcome. This is one idea of heaven. Believers are in a strange land and at school in this life. In the life to come they will be at home.

"Heaven is a place of 'mansions,' -of lasting, permanent, and eternal dwellings. Here in the body we are in lodgings, tents, and tabernacles, and must submit to many changes. In heaven we shall be settled at last, and go out no more. 'Here we have no continuing city.' (Heb. 13:14) Our house not made with hands shall never be taken down.

"Heaven is a place of 'many mansions.' There will be room for all believers and room for all sorts, for little saints as well as great ones, for the weakest believer as well as for the strongest. The feeblest child of God need not fear there will be no place for him. None will be shut out but impenitent sinners and obstinate unbelievers.

"Heaven is a place where Christ Himself shall be present. He will not be content to dwell without His people: -'Where I am, there ye shall be also.' We need not think that we shall be alone and neglected. Our Saviour, -our elder Brother, -our Redeemer, who loved us and gave Himself for us, shall be in the midst of us for ever. What we shall see, and whom we shall see in heaven, we cannot fully conceive yet, while are in the body. But one thing is certain: we shall see Christ.

"Let these things sink down into our minds. To the worldly and careless they may seem nothing at all. To all who feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of God they are full of unspeakable comfort. If we hope to be in heaven it is pleasant to know what heaven is like.

"We have, lastly, in this passage *a solid ground for expecting good things to come*. The evil heart of unbelief within us is apt to rob us of our comfort about heaven. 'We wish we could think it was all true.' -'We fear we shall never be admitted into heaven.' -Let us hear what Jesus says to encourage us.

"One cheering word is this, -'I go to prepare a place for you.' Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people: a place which we shall find Christ Himself has

made ready for true Christians. He has prepared it by procuring a right for every sinner who believers to enter in. None can stop us, and say we have no business there. –He has prepared it by going before us as our Head and Representative, and taking possession of it for all the members of His mystical body. As our Forerunner He has marched in, leading captivity captive, and has placed His banner in the land of glory. – He has prepared it by carrying our names with Him as our High Priest into the holy of holies, and making angels ready to receive us. They that enter heaven will find they are neither unknown nor unexpected.

“Another cheering word is this, -‘I will come again and receive you unto myself.’ Christ will not wait for believers to come up to Him, but will come down to them, to raise them from their graves and escort them to their heavenly home. As Joseph came to meet Jacob, so will Jesus come to call His people together and guide them to their inheritance. The second advent ought never to be forgotten. Great is the blessedness of looking back to Christ coming the first time to suffer for us, but no less great is the comfort of looking forward to Christ coming the second time, to raise and reward His saints.”

J.C. Ryle, pp. 55-59

I remember one dear saint, Dorothy Rogers, who spent her last days in an adult home in Scotia, New York. She faithfully attended my afternoon worship services, sitting in her wheelchair and singing the hymns by heart. One day, I was notified that Dorothy had suffered a stroke and was now in the hospital. I met with the elders of her church and went into the room to pay her a visit. I was struck by her countenance. She was not pain, not struggling, not even weary; she was not scared, frightened, or nervous. In fact, she had a noticeable attitude about her – as one in a terminal waiting room rather than hospital bed. She was calm, curious, even bored as the necessary time passed. When I greeted her she smiled and said: “I’m going home!”

I waited to hear any news of her passing in the days after but it never came. I returned to the adult home for the next worship service and, there was ‘Dottie’ - glad to see me as usual, but looking disappointed. She had ‘missed her flight’, she would have to ‘take the next bus’. She would have to ‘live out of a suitcase for a little while longer’. Like Paul, she longed to be present with the Lord; but much like Paul, she recognized the Lord wanted her here a while longer – so, she kept busy.

D. Barker

I also recall an elderly gentleman named Bob Black. When I candidated for the responsibility of planting a church in Amsterdam, New York, he met and greeted me simply with the words “Welcome home.” I saw Bob regularly in the days and years to come. Bob’s life verses were Jn. 14:1-3. One reason for that was that Bob had always known a secure home. He was born and raised at 31 3rd St., and it was home for Bob for 81 years. He has seen his brother and grandmother die in that house, the family-centered activity grew out of that house. It was more than a home, it was the homestead. Bob lived out his last years alone. He would have preferred to have died in that house. And so, in his claim of these verses, he knew the comfort and blessing of such permanence in life: ‘Welcome home.’

D. Barker

“Heaven is likely to become increasingly interesting to us as we grow older. D.L. Moody tells of a man who testified that in his youth he thought of heaven largely as a great shining city, filled with vast walls, domes and towers, and populated by millions of angels, all of whom were strangers to him. But then his little brother died. After that he thought of heaven as a great shining city, filled with vast walls and towers and unknown angels, but now also with one little fellow he knew. When a second brother died there were two he knew. Acquaintances died. In time one of his children went to be with Jesus; this one was followed by another and then still another. By this time the man seldom thought of walls and towers. He thought of those residents of the Celestial City whom he knew, and his interest in heaven intensified. Toward the end of his life so many of his acquaintances had gone to heaven that it sometime seemed to him that he knew more persons in heaven than he did on earth. And, of course, his thoughts fixed increasingly on that distant place.

“Some of you reading these words are like that. In your youth you did not care much for heaven. But now many of your friends are there – perhaps nearly all of them – and your thoughts turn to heaven often.”

James Boice

Chapter 14 Excursus #2:

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments." (14:15)

The first lesson is the obvious lesson of the verse. It is that *if we love Jesus, we must (and indeed will) keep his commandments*. This truth is important, for it strikes at once at any perversion of the Christian faith by antinomianism.

Antinomianism is an unfamiliar word to most people, but it is not hard to understand. It is the view that the commandments of the Word of God have no proper place in Christianity. Usually the expression of this view contrast law with grace in a way that eliminates the value of law entirely. Thus, in the name of grace the God of grace, who is also a God of holiness and justice, is eliminated. People are told that law is an enemy of grace, that the God of Sinai is a stern and unlovable deity who is rightly banished from the pages of the New Testament and that today the only possible guide for any ethical system is love. As might be expected, in this system outright disobedience to the commands of God is countenanced. Thus, marriages may be broken up, adultery sanctioned, contracts broken, parents rejected, worldly goods coveted, and countless other things eagerly embraced – so long as the actions do not ‘hurt’ anyone and ‘love’ remains the underlying motivation.

But this is a travesty. We admit, of course – indeed, we must proclaim it widely – that salvation is never by works, that it is always by grace. At this point law and grace are opposites. The Book of Galatians stands as a commanding witness to that fact. We will even admit that the proper way to live the Christian life is not by imposing a list of rules (even God-given rules) either upon ourselves or others. To do this may assure an outward conformity to a certain external expression of Christian character. But it does not change the heart. That is why love, not law, must lie at the heart of Christian ethics. In this, the exponents of situation ethics, or the new morality, are right. But having said this, we must immediately go on to add that any love that does not express itself in conformity with the commands of Christ is not the kind of love about which Christ was speaking. Indeed, it is a pseudo-love, a love that is false in itself and that deals falsely with the one espousing it.

A number of years ago, when the so-called “new morality” was at the crest of its popularity, a number of theologians met at one of our prestigious eastern seminaries to discuss it. Most were in favor of the new morality. So the discussion centered on the value of being free from rules and regulations, including those found in the Bible. “But there must be some guidelines,” someone said. This was discussed, and at length it was decided that the only acceptable guideline was love. Anything that flowed from love was permissible. Anything was allowed so long as it did not hurt anyone.

While the discussion was progressing along these lines, a Roman Catholic priest, who had been invited to the discussion and who was in the room, became very quiet. At length his silence was noticeable. So the others turned to him and asked, “What do you think? Don’t you agree that the only limiting factor in any ethical decision is love?”

The priest replied, "If you love me, keep my commandments." He was right. Love may be a valuable guideline, but only if it is love in conformity with the love of God and therefore also inconformity with the commandments he has given.

This does not devalue love, however, for the two go together. In fact, only love will succeed in moving us to keep the commandments. Here Maclaren has written wisely, "The principle that underlies these words, then, is this, that love is the foundation of obedience, and obedience is the sure outcome and result of love. ... That is exactly what distinguishes and lifts the morality of the gospel above all other systems. The worst man in the world knows a great deal more of his duty than the best man does. It is not for want of knowledge that men go to the devil, but it is for want of power or will to live their knowledge. And what morality fails to do, with its clearest utterances of human duty Christ comes and does. The one law is like the useless proclamations posted up in some rebellious district, where there is no army to back them, and the king's authority from whom they come is flouted. The other law gets itself obeyed. Such is the difference between the powerless morality of the world and the commandment of Jesus Christ. Here is the road plain and straight. What matters that, if there is no force to draw the cart along it? There might as well be no road at all. Here stand all your looms, polished and in perfect order, but there is no steam in the boilers; and so there is no motion, and nothing is woven. What we want is not law, but power, and what the gospel gives us, and stands alone in giving us, is not merely the knowledge of the will of God, and the clear revelation of what we ought to be, but the power to become it.

"Love does that, and love alone. That strong force brought into action in our hearts will drive out from thence all rivals, all false and low things. The true way to cleanse the Augean stables, as the old myth has it, was to turn the river into them. It would have been endless work to wheel out the filth in wheelbarrows loaded by spades: turn the stream in, and it will sweep away all the foulness. When the Ark comes into the Temple, Dagon lies, a mutilated stump, upon the threshold. When Christ comes into any heart, then all the obscene and twilight-loving shapes that lurked there and defiled it, will vanish like ghosts at cock-crowing before His calm and pure Presence. He, and He alone, entering my heart by the portals of my love, will coerce my evil and stimulate my good. And if I love Him, I shall keep His commandments."

There is a second lesson in this verse. It comes from the reverse of what we have been saying. Thus far we have said that if we truly love Christ, that is, if we love him with the kind of love about which he is speaking and with which he loves us, we will keep his commandments. But we may also say (for the proposition is reversible) that *if we keep his commandments, we will love (and can know that we love) Jesus*. This reversal is valid, for Jesus makes it himself just a few verses later: "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him" (vs. 21).

But how does this happen? ... When a man or woman begins to obey God, first in responding to his offer of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ and then in a growing desire to live a Christlike life, this is evidence of a divine and supernatural working in

his or her life. It is proof that God is present and that he has already begun a regenerative work within the individual.

James Boice, pp. 106-1108

Chapter 14 Excursus #3:
"another Helper" (14:16)

The first point we must settle in our minds in regard to the Holy Spirit is whether the Holy Spirit is a real person, whose work it is to get hold of us and use us, or whether the Holy Spirit is merely some vague power we are to get hold of and use to our benefit. This is important as a mere matter of truth; for either the Holy Spirit is a real person, or he is not. But it is also important on a practical level. If we think of the Holy Spirit as a mysterious power, our thought will continually be, 'How can I get more of the Holy Spirit?' If we think of the Holy Spirit as a person, our thought will be, 'How can the Holy Spirit have more of me?' The first thought is entirely pagan. The second is New Testament Christianity. ...

We must admit that when we begin to talk about the Holy Spirit as a person, we are attempting to put into words something that is actually larger than words. What we are saying is that the Holy Spirit is one member of the Trinity, equal in all ways to both the Father and the Son. But we are not saying that there are three gods, which the term 'member' or even 'person' seems to imply. There are three persons; but in a way which is beyond our understanding these three are also one. We also confess as the Old Testament does, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one' (Dt. 6:4). ...

If the Spirit were only a power, the promise [stated here by Jesus] would be in the nature of a compensation - 'I am going to be taken from you, but I will give you *something* to make up for my departure.' This is not what this verse is talking about. It is not a thing that is being given, but rather another divine personality that is being sent. This one must have knowledge, for he will know of the disciples' distress. He must have feelings, for he will identify with them in their distress and comfort them. He must have will, for he will determine to carry out this commission.

J. Boice, pp. 1112-1113

1. The personal actions ascribed to the Holy Spirit prove his personality (Jn. 14:16-18; 1 Cor. 12:11).
2. His distinction from the Father and the Son and his mission from both prove his personality (Jn. 15:26).
3. The coordinate rank and power that belong the Holy Spirit equally with the Father and the Son prove it. All Trinitarian benedictions make this point clearly (Mt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).
4. The appearance of the Holy Spirit under a visible form at the baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ and on the day of Pentecost proves it (Lk. 3:22; Acts 2:3).
5. The sin against the Holy Spirit proves it, for this implies offense against a personality (Mt. 12:31-32).
6. The way in which the Holy Spirit is distinguished from this gifts also proves that he is a person and not merely a spiritual force or power (1 Cor. 12).

G. Smeaton, p. 109

The passage clearly indicates that the Holy Spirit is not merely a power but *a person*, just like the Father and the Son. He is *another* Helper, not a *different* Helper. The word *another* indicates *one like myself*, who will take my place, do my work. Hence, if Jesus is a person, the Holy Spirit must also be a person. Moreover, personal attributes are everywhere ascribed to him (14:26; 15:26; Acts 15:28; Rom. 8:26; 1 Cor. 12:11; 1 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 22:17). His relation to the Father and the Son is described as of such a character that if these are persons, he too must be a person (Mt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Pet. 1:1, 2).

For the same reason, if Jesus is divine, the Spirit, too, must be divine. This too is taught throughout the New Testament, to say nothing of the Old. Thus, divine names are given to him (Acts 5:4; 28:25; Heb. 10:15, 16); divine attributes are ascribed to him; such as, eternity, omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience (1 Cor. 2:10; 12:4-6; Heb. 9:14); and divine works are predicated of him (Mt. 12:18; Lk. 4:18; Jn. 4:16; 1 Cor. 12:2-11; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:12). Passages such as Mt. 28:19 and 2 Cor. 13:14 clearly indicate that the three persons are completely equal. One and the same divine essence pervades them all.

According to the passage which we are studying, the Holy Spirit is given by the Father, in answer to the request of the Son. He proceeds from both Father and Son. The Father gives him; the Son sends him (15:26). He is the Spirit of the Father; he is also the Spirit of Christ (Mt. 10:20; Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 2:11, 12; and Gal. 4:6). The Holy Spirit is the person in whom the Father and the Son meet one another. ...

Hendriksen, pp. 275-76

The first point that the Lord Jesus makes in his teaching about the Holy Spirit is that he is a person, ... But what sort of a person is he? ... Here the Lord speaks of the Holy Spirit as 'another Counselor.' ... Who is the first Counselor? It is obviously Jesus himself. Therefore, the second Counselor is to be just like him. That is, he is to be another divine being living with them and in them. ...

1. Divine attributes are ascribed to the Spirit. The word 'holy' is itself a divine attribute, at least in its most exalted sense. So also are the attributes of omniscience (1 Cor. 2:10-11; Jn. 16:12-13), omnipresence (Lk. 1:35), and omnipotence (Ps. 139:7-10).
2. Works that are exclusively the works of God are attributed to the Holy Spirit. Creation is one example. In the Book of Job we read, 'By his breath the skies became fair' (26:13) and 'The Spirit of God has made me' (33:4). The Holy Spirit is described as the One who imparts life, another divine work (Jn. 3:6; Rom. 8:11). He is the One responsible for the giving forth of the Word of God, the Bible. "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit' (2 Pet. 1:21).
3. The Holy Spirit is ranked coordinate with God the Father and God the Son. The benedictions cited earlier are examples of this.
4. The name of God is indirectly given to him. The clearest example of this is in Acts 5:3-4, where Peter says to Ananias, 'Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit? ... Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.'

J. Boice, p. 1115

Chapter 14 Excursus #4:
What About Tongues? (14:16-18)

The verses from John 14, ... do not say a word about tongues as one of the Spirit's gifts to the church. This in itself is significant. But it is almost impossible to speak about the Holy Spirit today without giving at least some consideration to the tongues question. What are we to think of the tongues phenomena? Is it of God? Of the devil? Or is it merely self-induced by those who claim to have had the experience?

...

The one thing we must always say is that the sovereign God of the Bible can do anything he chooses and that, if this means 'tongues,' so be it. ... At the same time we must also say that just because God can do anything does not mean that he has therefore done it, at least in every situation. Or, to put it in slightly different terms, it does not mean that everything that claims to be of the Spirit of God is therefore of God.

...

In reading through [the] important chapters of 1 Corinthians (ch.s 12 & 14) we notice six principles.

1. *The gift of tongues can be counterfeited.* That is, there is a genuine gift; but there is also a duplication of that gift by other spirits, whether the spirit is of Satan or merely the spirit of the individual. ...
2. *There are many different and valuable gifts of the Holy Spirit and the gift of tongues is just one.* ... Why does Paul stress that it is by the one Spirit of God that the gifts are given? Apparently, to forestall pride. ... The fact that Paul later minimizes the gift of tongues indicates that pride was a particular danger for those who possessed this gift at Corinth.
3. These gifts are for *the edification and unity of the church (12:12-27)*. It follows from this that if a particular exercise of the gift of tongues does not promote growth or, worse yet, if it leads to schism, then either the gift is not of God or it is being exercised in a way contrary to God's purposes for it. ...
4. [I]f the gifts are to be listed in the order of importance, *tongues will always come low on the list (12:28-14:12)*. ... [H]e concludes that if any of the gifts are to be sought after, it is the gift of prophecy (by which he means the ability to preach and teach the word clearly) rather than the gift of tongues that is desirable (1 Cor. 14:1). ...
5. *[T]he gift of tongues is fraught with particular dangers and must therefore be exercised with safeguards [12:13-38]*. The first danger is the danger of confusion, or disorder. ... The second danger is the danger of a Christianity without content, which Paul counters by insisting on interpretation. ...

Can the exercise of tongues ever be wrong? The answer is yes, in several situations, including whenever Paul's guidelines in 1 Corinthians are disregarded. ... On the other hand, the dangers and errors in the exercise of this gift should not be an

excuse for those who possess other gifts to neglect their exercise. ... What is your gift?
Whatever it is, you are to use it.

J. Boice, pp. 1135-1140