

because we want to know God more and more, and deeper and deeper.

Jesus tells us that if we know Him we will know our Father, God. Indeed there is no other way to know our Father except through the ministry and mission of Jesus. So we continue with joy the searching of the Bible, and this time we will look into the Gospel of John.

The Gospel of John is a Gospel of experiential love, grace, and objective absolute truth. Five parts in the Bible are attributed to John: the Gospel, 1st, 2nd, 3rd John, and the book of Revelation. As we read through the Gospel and the letters, we see that John is concerned to call the disciples of Jesus Christ back to the original roots of their faith. Each of us is called to return to that 'first love' wherein we experienced the grace of God in forgiving all of our sin and sins and wrapping us in a transforming love that was meant to give us the desire and motivation to change our lives. We are exhorted to come back to the only real truth, God and His Word on life. God cannot lie, and truth is what He says it is, whether we see it, understand it, accept it or not.

JOHN, A RE-BUILDER

The writings of John were late in the first century, and the young church had already begun to experience infiltration from the 'world'. John is calling us back, a re-builder of our faith. God has many depths of meaning in His Word, and they are all interconnected. As we continue to visit with God our Father, and listen to Him teach us by His Word, He unfolds little morsels of depth that continue to build our confidence in the fact that every word was planned. One example of this is brought out in the book *WHAT SHALL THIS MANDO?* by Watchman Nee. Nee comments on the simple details of the vocation and occupation of the apostles Peter, Paul, and John. Peter we know was a fisherman, and Jesus

tells him to follow Him and become a fisher of men. Peter was very much the primary evangelist of the first twelve apostles. He gave the first sermon on the day of Pentecost, and netted 3000 souls. He later was the first evangelist to the Gentiles as he delivered the Gospel to the house of Cornelius. (Acts 10)

Paul was a tent maker, and the primary legacy we have from him was in the building up of the Church. Paul was given the message of the reality of the 'Body of Christ' and although he too was an evangelist, we see him as a builder. His task was building up the Body of Christ.

John was a fisherman also, but we see a little detail in the Gospel of Matthew about the call of John. He was in the boat mending the nets. Peter was to start the Church, Paul would build it up, and John was going to repair the 'holes' where the grace, truth, and love were slipping out of the Church. John not only reveals the divinity of Jesus, but also the divinity that must be operative in our lives to enable us both to answer the call to follow Jesus and to live out that call in our lives.

John has many distinctive phrases like; "I am the way, I am the truth, I am the life." These recall to us that it is not a system of instructions to which we are to conform, or a series of teachings we are to follow, but it is a relationship of another life merged into us to take the place of our own self-centered lives. Jesus is divine in origin, and calls us into Himself. We are back again to the reality of a substitute life. As Jesus was our substitute in death, so also He is to be our substitute in life. In the Gospel of John we find the question put to Him; "Lord, what work must I do to gain eternal life?" and Jesus answers; "This is the work that God requires, that you continually be believing on Him." (see John 6:27-28)

"BOOK OF SIGNS"

John reveals the love of our Father for us in special ways. He shows us the scope of the Father's love in the variety of miracles and signs Jesus performs in the first twelve chapters of the Gospel, and then the depth of that love in

the last chapters of the Gospel. The first basic part has been called by the scholars the 'Book of Signs' which begins with the marriage feast at Cana, and concludes at the end of chapter 12. As we read through these chapters, we see Jesus doing the things He does for everyday people to meet everyday needs in their lives. Each of these 'signs' has a surface meaning, and then a series of additional meanings and teachings for us. As we think on the Word of God, and ask the Lord to teach us, the Holy Spirit opens our mind to experience the love that is beyond 'knowledge'.

"BOOK OF GLORY"

John then begins what is called 'the Book of Glory', as the teaching moves us toward the greatest of all acts of the love of God toward us, the crucifixion and death of Jesus. "Glory"—what a strange word to our way of thinking to describe the death of Jesus, but a look at the meaning of the word in the original Greek gives us some insight. The word is 'doxa' and it primarily signifies an opinion, estimate, and hence, the honor resulting from a good opinion. (W.E. Vine, *EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY OF NEW TESTAMENT WORDS*. Revell).

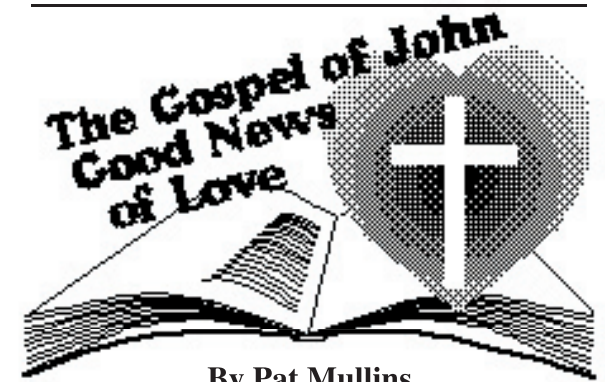
What does this tell us about the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus? God is stating His opinion of the life of His Son. He is worthy to carry the full weight of the penalty due to mankind. His life of obedience has earned Him the right to stand in for us. Indeed the Lamb of God is worthy. "Thou art worthy to take the scroll and to break its seals, for thou wast slain and by thy blood didst purchase for God men of every tribe and language, people and nation; thou hast made of them a royal house, to serve our God as priests; and they shall reign upon the earth.'..." "Worthy is the Lamb, the Lamb that was slain, to receive all power and wealth, wisdom

and might, honor and glory and praise!" (Rev. 5:9 & 11) God expresses His opinion of Jesus as worthy to pay the full price, and that is the glory and recognition that God gives Him.

FREE TO BE ME

As we read these teachings of Jesus, let us see too that the real glory is in our obedience to the Holy Spirit as the living Word of God is revealed to our hearts. It is in our accepting God's word on the need for Jesus to become Lord in our life that we can begin to experience His love for us enough to be able to accept ourselves as we are. We can then quit arguing with God over how He made us, and we will begin to see how He really made us: to live in Christ. In the prayer of St. Francis is found this secret again. 'It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.' Only one life, mine or Christ's, can be in control at one time in any given situation. When we see the love, then we can begin to see the life. When we begin to live the love, we enter into THE Life. How? Ask the Lord how right now. Each of us are so specially made that only God can give us the specifics for our individual lives. We are called into the law of love and freedom, and the HOW is to want Him to lead and then to surrender to that leading.

The Gospel of John - The Good News of Love according to one who was there and can testify; God loves you now and forever more. As we visit with our Father God through His Word, the Holy Spirit will teach us how to be free in the life and love of God. We don't have to do it. In fact, we can't do it. We will fail if we try, no matter how hard we try. (Rom. 7:14-25) Only Jesus can do it, and He will. He will be, in us, the Way, Truth, and Life we desire. We shall come to know the Father as we live in the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit, and we shall dwell in eternal life now and all the rest of the days of our life, forever and ever. AMEN.



By Pat Mullins

"And this is the eternal life, namely, that they might be having an experiential knowledge of you, the only genuine God, and of Him whom you sent on a mission, Jesus Christ."

(John 17:3 Wuest Expanded Translation)

EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE OF HIM

Our text is from the 17th chapter of the Gospel of John. In looking through several translations to find the rendering that best expresses our goal and purpose we were delighted to find in the translation the very essence of the thought we hope to convey. That is a first hand experience of the person of God, through the mission of Jesus Christ, as revealed by the Holy Spirit in the Bible, which gives 'life' to our lives. Said in another way, we have come to see, by the grace of God, that all the other books I may read, all the other teaching I may receive, cannot replace the need to read the Word of God if I seek to know God. All of these may indeed supplement and amplify the Word, but cannot take the place of firsthand reading of the Bible. I come to 'know' a person by spending time with the person, and entering into communion and communication with that person. We are reading the Bible

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