

## THE SPIRIT AND SALVATION

GERALD L. BORCHERT  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary  
Louisville, KY 40280

### I. *Introduction: A Spiritual Gospel*

In this era which is marked by political unrest, guerrilla warfare, unbridled greed, blatant immorality, helpless poverty and confusing value standards Christians are called upon to evidence the power of the risen Christ in their lives. In this setting of confusion and insecurity where publishers are offering scores of books related to the analysis of society's troubles and an equal number of quick fix treatments for contemporary ills, the temptation for the church is to follow in the train of seeking for instantaneous religious pills that will settle our desperate plight. In such an era it is timely for the church to drink deeply of the refreshing message of the Gospel of John.

As a resource for helping Southern Baptists to think about one aspect of John during the forthcoming Winter Bible Study, the editors have asked me to deal with the subject of the Spirit and salvation. Of course, an entire book could be written on this bipolar topic.<sup>1</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> A helpful resource for the study of Johannine themes is the introduction of C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: University Press, 1958). In this article I am herewith making no attempt at citing all the resources which are available concerning the study of John in my *Assurance and Warning* (Nashville: Broadman, 1987). Instead, I recommend that readers consult that work for the footnotes at the appropriate texts or the following primary commentaries which will supply a variety of perspectives: G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (WBC; Waco: Word, 1987); R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (tr. G. Beasley-Murray; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971); R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (AB; 2 vols; Garden City: Doubleday, 1966 and 1970); F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983); W. E. Hull, "John," *The Broadman Bible Commentary* Vol. 9 (Nashville: Broadman, 1970); L. Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (NIC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971); R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John* (tr. K. Smith; 3 vols; New York:

topic's appropriateness is beyond dispute, given the importance of salvation in dealing with the insecurities of today's society and the high level of interest and concern which many Christians have in matters relating to the Spirit. To this subject, then, attention is turned with the reminder that Clement of Alexandria early referred to John as the "Spiritual Gospel." If ever there was an "in-spirited" book, it would have to be the Gospel of John.<sup>2</sup>

## II. *Salvation in John*

In beginning any study on salvation in John, one needs to start near the end of the book. John stated his purpose clearly in 20:30-31: "Many other signs Jesus did. . . which are not written in this book; but these are written that you might believe Jesus is the Christ, God's Son, and that believing you might have life. . . ."<sup>3</sup> Concerning salvation then John's purpose seems certain. Nothing less than believing that issues in transformed living is adequate for understanding John's purpose of writing. Changed living is his goal!<sup>4</sup>

### *Believing and Knowing in John*

Now English readers of the gospel need to realize that in pursuing his goal John totally avoided using the Greek nouns for "faith" (πίστις) and "knowledge" (γνώσις). He used only the verbs for "believe" (πιστεύω) and "know" (γινώσκω and οἶδα). The reason was that John was faced with problems from an early form of a heresy called Gnosticism which emphasized the fact that salvation was based upon what you know or believe, i.e., ideas and information. Instead, John wanted his readers to understand that salvation was based upon who you know or in whom you believe, i.e., a relationship with God.<sup>5</sup> The purpose of John, then, was to make absolutely clear to his readers that salvation is based upon a relationship with a person--Jesus Christ--and not merely upon facts or information about that person.

Crossroad, 1982); S. Smalley, *John, Evangelist and Interpreter* (Greenwood, SC: Attic, 1978) and G. A. Turner and J. R. Mantey, *The Gospel According to John* (Evangelical Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.).

For those interested in an example of the new literary approach (reader response) to the study of John, see the important work of my colleague R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983).

<sup>2</sup> See my discussion in *Assurance and Warning*, p. 86.

<sup>3</sup> The translations in this article unless otherwise noted are mine.

<sup>4</sup> See my discussion in *Assurance and Warning*, p. 91.

<sup>5</sup> See my discussions in *Great Themes from John* (Buffalo: Baptist Life Association, 1965) 5-6; "The Fourth Gospel and its Theological Impact," *RevExp* 78 (1981)

*An Illustration from Lazarus*

Certainly confessional information is important but by itself it can lead to lifeless words which lack the dynamic of God. In this vein of thought we are reminded of the climactic Lazarus story in the first half of the gospel. The disciples were north in Galilee when Jesus received word that Lazarus was ill. When Jesus told the disciples that he was going south, the only concern of the disciples was that the south was the region of their enemies. They surely would have confessed with Peter that Jesus had the "words of eternal life" (6:68) but at that point all Thomas and the disciples could think about was going south to die (11:16). Dynamic living and confession were radically separated by them at that point.

And what about Martha? As I have indicated many times elsewhere, she stoutly asserted that if only Jesus had been present, her brother would not have died (11:21). But, she added that even at that point whatever Jesus asked of God, God would do it (11:22). When Jesus told her that her brother would live, she replied that she knew good Pharisaic theology to the effect that he would rise at the end of time (11:24). When Jesus countered that he was the resurrection and life and that he made the dead live, she responded with, "Lord, I believe that you are Christ, God's Son. . ." (11:27). Note that this confession is parallel to John's purpose statement (20:31). But please do not stop reading the story here. While some may be ready to baptize anyone who makes such a confession, I have said over and over again that those words are not the end of the story.<sup>6</sup>

Mary next came on the scene and repeated the same condition: "if only you would have been here, my brother would not have died" (11:32). Then the friends asked why the miracle worker could not have kept Lazarus from dying (11:37). For everyone in the story it was too late. Lazarus was dead! So when Jesus asked them to take him to the tomb and then to take away the stone, they were all convinced it was part of the mourning process of Jesus. Notice, however, what Martha said: "Lord he has been dead four days and he stinks!" (11:39). In support of Martha it is certainly not difficult to imagine in the hot Palestinian climate after four days that the body would stink.

But reflect for a moment on the various statements of Martha: "Lord, I believe that you are Christ" and "Whatever you ask of God, God will give it to you." Then consider: "Lord he stinks!" What do you think John was trying to tell us by writing the story the way he

<sup>6</sup> See for example *Assurance and Warning*, pp. 122-23.

did? Do you think he may have known people who were full of confessions about Jesus but who lacked a living sense of Christ's presence in their lives?

### *The Witness of the Prologue*

Turn next for a moment and think about how this gospel begins. The Prologue (1:1-18) is one of the finest Christological statements in the Bible. The Genesis creation statement is not repeated. It is assumed, but to that story is added the message about the Word (λόγος;) having been active in creation and then mysteriously becoming incarnate (human, flesh=σάρξ, 1:14). The Prologue is also about humanity because when the Word came to his own place (his world) and to his own people (those who should have recognized him), he was rejected (1:11). But thank God there were some who received him, who truly believed him and they have become the children of God (1:12).

Yet to understand the Johannine picture of salvation we must once again be very careful to recognize what John meant by believe. Many people love to quote John 1:12. And when you listen to them recite the text from the King James Version, the emphasis of their salvation statement of becoming children of God falls on "even to them that believe on his name." Now before I reflect on this statement, let me indicate that I take no joy in pointing out the theological faults of Christians because I myself have drawn a number of poor theological conclusions over the years in wrestling with biblical texts. Indeed, at one time I also treated the "even" in this verse as the minimum statement of what is necessary to gain salvation, just as some still do. But my friends the "even" in the KJV is *not in the Greek!* This statement in John is not some minimum statement like: all you have to do is believe in the name of Jesus. John was not interested in minimums of faith for salvation. He was concerned about authenticity. To believe in the name of Jesus means to accept his nature in his own life. Salvation is not a matter of minimums of belief but of an entire approach to life.

### *An Important Johannine Aside*

Do you remember what John said at 2:23-25? Many believed (πιστεύω) when they watched the signs which Jesus was doing. But notice that Jesus did not "believe (πιστεύω) them" (or: entrust himself to them)." The two uses of "believe" here reveal that John was concerned about a believing that goes beyond mere words. The reason for this emphasis is that Jesus knew all about the superficialities and insincerities of human believing. God is not interested in hasty verbal statements of believing. God is concerned that the entirety of a

person's life is committed to him. We need to realize as weak human beings that God still knows all about our frailties, half-beliefs and pseudo-commitments. He is concerned about our lives, not just about our words. John wanted his readers to experience a different kind of believing than mere intellectualizing. His goal was transformed living.

*The Connection Between Salvation and Spirit in Chapter Three*

In this respect remember that Nicodemus came to Jesus thinking that he understood who Jesus was. As he addressed Jesus, he said "Rabbi, we know you are. . . from God" (3:2). Jesus did not waste his time thanking Nicodemus for such a fine introduction. Jesus simply told him that he needed to be reborn (or born from above) and if he did not experience rebirth he would not "see the kingdom of God" (3:3). Moreover, his rebirth would have to involve "water and the Spirit" (3:5). In the face of these statements the Pharisaic teacher who came to Jesus at night was stunned. (Watch the time designations like "night" in John. They are important clues to the spiritual temperature of the story.) Nicodemus thought that he knew who Jesus was. He discovered quickly that he neither knew Jesus nor the salvation about which the Lord was speaking.

To be a part of Jesus or part of God's children, it is necessary to be born of water and the Spirit. Now from this text it should be apparent that the emphasis falls not on the external matter of water but on the internal significance of the Spirit. To be born of the Spirit ( $\piνεῦμα$ ) cannot be explained in human terms for it is like being a child of the wind ( $\piνεῦμα$ ; note the play on the word). A Christian's real source of energy is hidden in God and a Christian's movement in life is known and directed by God (3:8). To understand rebirth and salvation, therefore, is the beginning of understanding the divine mystery at work in the world (3:12).

*The Cross and Judgment.* The way of the Spirit and the nature of salvation is the focus of this paper. To perceive the Spirit's way, according to John, is to understand something about the one who descended from heaven and who was stretched out as Moses raised up the serpent in the wilderness (3:13-14). This crucified Jesus was God's means of bringing eternal life to everyone who believes (3:15). In the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, God demonstrated his love and indicated that he did not want to be perceived as some angry pagan God who desired human blood and death. God really loved his people of the world (3:16-17). In Jesus, God came to his creation (1:9). But many have not accepted his love (1:10-11), and therefore stand condemned already (3:18).

As John looked back on the "crucial" event (the cross) of history with post-resurrection eyes, he wanted his readers to realize that there was no "sitting on the fence" with God. There is in John no putting off of the decision. Failing to decide for Jesus (to believe Jesus) means condemnation already. The judgment has already been rendered! Failure to obey the Son, therefore, means that the wrath of God already is directed against disobedient humanity. Nowhere in the Bible is the love of God more clearly defined; yet, nowhere in the Bible is judgment more severely declared than in this Gospel of John. The refusal of a person to accept God's love in Christ, according to John, means that that person is now living under the judgment of God. Judgment is not only future with John. It is a condition of "red alert" NOW!

*The Evangelistic Call.* No Christian, therefore, should be embarrassed about calling non-Christians to Christ. We may be embarrassed about some manipulative methods that are used in evangelism but there is no need to apologize for the evangelical call. The necessity of rebirth is a fundamental presupposition in John. Moreover, as I have indicated at length in *The Dynamics of Evangelism* the necessity of decision making is not only evident in this story but also in the story of Jesus' dealing with the Samaritan woman and elsewhere throughout John.<sup>7</sup>

*The Question of "Filled With the Spirit."* But before we leave chapter three of John one further matter needs to be noted concerning the Spirit. Some Christians often enter into dialogue with charismatics over the idea of being "filled with the Holy Spirit." We must all understand, however, that this expression is primarily a Lucan word-picture, though it appears once in Ephesians in contrast to being drunk with wine (Eph 5:18). It is used in Luke of John the Baptist, Elizabeth and of Zechariah (Luke 1:15, 41 and 67) *even before Jesus was born* and then it is used a number of times in Acts concerning the early Christians (e.g., Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17 and 13:9). It is to be contrasted in Luke and Acts with particular Lucan expressions of being filled with wrath, awe or fear, madness, wonder, indignation, and envy (Luke 4:28; 5:26; 6:11 and Acts 3:10, 5:17; 13:45 and 19:29). The expression "filled with the Holy Spirit" then is a particular Lucan style of explaining the way a Christian lives in close relationship to God.

The expression "filled with the Holy Spirit" does not appear in any Johannine literature. Moreover, great care must be exercised in

<sup>7</sup> See G. Borchert, "Signs for Believing" in *The Dynamics of Evangelism* (Waco: Word, 1976) 57-72.

determining the meaning of this word-picture lest one thinks that some people have only part of the Holy Spirit while other Christians have all of him. Indeed, John probably would stand diametrically opposed to that notion because he argued that “it is not by measure that [God] gives the Spirit” (3:34). The words in the King James Version “unto him” are again in italics which means that they are not in the Greek. Did John think that a person could have only part of the Holy Spirit? Indeed, did Luke ever make such a radical statement? To be filled with the Holy Spirit is not a quantitative statement but a statement about authentic commitment to God as the Spirit makes the divine presence known. This fact is of particular importance as we turn now to discuss the role of the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete (Comforter, Counselor, and Supporter), in John.

### III. *The Spirit in John*

The Greek term *παράκλητος* as it is applied to the Holy Spirit is a special Johannine term that is used only in three chapters (14-16) of John's farewell discourse between Jesus and the disciples. (It is also used of Jesus in 1 John 2:1; cf. John 14:16.) But these three chapters constitute the major teaching of John on the Holy Spirit. The context of the teaching is very important because the words are addressed in a setting where the followers of Jesus are disillusioned and feel totally empty at the thought of Jesus' immanent departure. The disciple's experience was one of feeling abandoned or of being orphaned (14:18).

#### *A Road Map and the Presence of God*

Jesus had just told them that he was going away to prepare a place for them and that he would return and take them to himself. He told them that they should understand where he was going (14:1-4). But Thomas and Philip voiced for the disciples their bewilderment. They wanted an outlined road map of his journey and a glimpse of God in order to gain some degree of security in the midst of such an upsetting crisis (14:5 and 8). For them to understand that Jesus was their road map and that he was the epitome of the Father was at that time almost impossible to conceive.

Believing that Jesus was actually united with the Father seemed to be beyond the scope of their thought patterns and so Jesus tried to help them through their thorn patches of unbelief by reminding them of the works that he did (14:11). If they could grasp the significance of Jesus' works, perhaps they would realize that Jesus had called them to greater works (14:12). Indeed, he had summoned them to a relationship in which they would be so dependent upon him (“ask in his

name") that they would discover the exciting power of answered prayer (14:13-14). Moreover, in obeying the will of the Son, they would find the answer to their sense of abandonment because Jesus would send to them another Paraclete (a Supporter, Advocate, Comforter, Counselor) to be with them (14:15-16). )

*Abiding in Christ's Love While in the World*

Obviously, John viewed Jesus as the first Paraclete of the disciples while he was with them. He was their supporter, counselor, comforter and advocate during his earthly ministry (14:21-25). He had given them a sense of security and peace while he was with them, but the time had come for him to leave them and their anxiety level was almost unbearable (14:27). They had difficulty understanding how a substitute would help them. They wanted Jesus (cf. 16:6, 16-19)! Jesus, therefore, tried to help them understand ahead of time what was about to happen and that the devil (the ruler of the world) really was not the ultimate power in the world (14:29-31). Jesus wished that they could rejoice at his going to the Father because he would come again to them (14:28). Their minds, however, were still stuck in the mire of their worldly concerns so Jesus continued in his task of providing them with preparatory advice.

*Abiding in Christ's Love While in the World*

In chap 15, through the *masal* (parable or allegory) of the vine and the branches, Jesus explained to them how authentic salvation and ministry were defined in terms of a personal relationship with him. Apart from him they would be like dead branches (15:6) and able to accomplish nothing that would count for God (15:5). But if they hung on to him (15:7) and were obedient to him (15:10), they would discover the power of prayer, of conversing with the Lord (15:7), and they would experience the fullness of joy in their lives (15:11).

*The Mark of the Christian and the Pain of Community.* Moreover, there was a specific quality that would mark them as people who were obediently abiding in Christ. *That quality was love*--not talk about love, but genuine obedience to Christ that is evidenced in a life of love (15:12-17; cf. 13:34-35). In the midst of our current Baptist controversy we all need to be reminded again and again of the fact that what really counts is not only the way a Christian talks but the way a believer acts. Genuine love is the test of whether we believe with our lives. What does that statement mean to us, my friends? How far has our believing carried us? Merely to our heads, or deep

into our lives as well? Let us all pray for the Spirit's enlightenment in answering this question in our own contexts.

*The Warning and the Promise.* My previous sentence is not some hastily added conclusion to a painful subject. It is born out of wrestling with the context of John 15:18-25 wherein the disciples were reminded that life in this world (perhaps sometimes in the church?) was not a setting of peace, but of hate and persecution and of unfair dealings. In that context of hostility Jesus reminded the disciples that when the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, would be sent by Jesus from the Father (cf. the *filioque* argument between the eastern and western church),<sup>8</sup> he would give them divine insight (witness) into the will of our Lord Jesus (15:26; cf. 16:7).

But why did Jesus speak in this manner? John indicated that the reason was in order to keep Christians from being "scandalized" (16:1). The Greek verb is the powerful *σκανδαλίζω* which is translated in the RSV as "falling away". Whatever reaction we may have to that translation, the point of 15:26-16:4 is to indicate that Jesus knew that life on earth would be very difficult. Some religious people would even think that they were doing God a service in attacking Christians (16:2). But in the midst of pain and anguish John, seeing with post-resurrection eyes, wanted his readers to remember that Jesus had promised to send the Paraclete to be the Christians' Advisor.

#### *The Evangelical Role of the Spirit*

In their distress at his immanent departure the disciples did not want Jesus to abandon them. But Jesus knew that it would be to their advantage for him to depart because if he would not leave, the Paraclete would not come to them (16:6-7). Moreover, Jesus informed them of the great resource the Paraclete would be. Their new Advocate's role would be threefold: (a) to convince the world of the reality of sin because of the world's refusal to believe in Jesus; (b) to make clear to everyone the necessity of righteousness with God and of

<sup>8</sup> *Filioque* is Latin for "and from the Son" and involves the question of whether the Spirit proceeds from the Father only or from the Father and from the Son. The latter position represents the Western version of the Nicene Creed. While the phrase was not part of the original decision of the ecumenical council at Nicea (A.D. 325), it was used as early as 447 at Toledo and confirmed by the local council there in 589. Leo III refused to accept it in 809 but later in the 9th century Photius of Constantinople excommunicated Nicholas I of the Western Church because of his acceptance of the addition. The argument was central to the fracture of east and west in 1054. Whatever may be the particular merits of the argument on both sides, it does seem from this text that the Father and Son are in harmony in the coming of the Spirit.

God's vindication of Jesus; and (c) to indicate to everyone that refusal to accept the way of God would lead to judgment because even the ruler of the world (the devil) is subject to the judgment of God and therefore there is no escape for anyone who refuses God's way in the world (16:8-11).

In this brief statement is summarized the evangelical role of the Holy Spirit. Everyone interested in evangelism (which should mean every Christian) ought to pay particular attention to these verses because they form a brief summary of the evangelistic goal of the Gospel. People need to acknowledge their sin and accept the righteousness of Jesus Christ in order to escape the clear judgment of God upon the way of rebellion and evil.

*Witness and Sin.* But before we leave this statement several other matters ought to be noted.. As one studies the *kerygma* (the preaching) of the early Church, one notices that there is a clear acknowledgment of sin but very little highlighting of past sins. In our churches sometimes one has the feeling that the more and greater the past sins one can confess the better is one's testimony. Accordingly, some Christians feel unimportant because they do not have a testimony involving vivid past sins. But such a pattern is the elevating of sin not Jesus. That style is bad news not good news! Excitement of a testimony ought not to proceed from a bad past but from a living life with Christ! Jesus is the focus of the early Church's preaching and he ought to be the focus of anything worthy of being called a Christian testimony. Let us talk about Jesus and his redeeming love, my friends, not about the greatness of ourselves or our past sins.

*Salvation and the Work of the Spirit.* In addition, one of the hardest lessons for any preacher to learn and which needs to be learned again and again is that salvation is the work of God--not the work of a preacher or any witness of the Gospel. Furthermore, we need to realize that salvation is certainly not fundamentally the work of a sinner who is confessing sin. Nevertheless, here is the true meeting point of authentic Calvinism with the Arminian call to repent--similarly sounded in John 3:16 (God loved. . . and we believe).<sup>9</sup> But remember that the only way anyone genuinely enters the kingdom of God is because the Holy Spirit touches a life in such a way that a person is enabled to believe. Jesus made that fact absolutely clear when he described the work of the Holy Spirit in John 16:8-11. The Holy Spirit convinces people of the horrible nature of sin, of the

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the interplay between Calvinism and Arminianism in John 3 see my *Assurance and Warning*, pp. 104-5.

victory in Jesus Christ, and of the impending nature of judgment for those who fail to believe.

The task of a preacher or a witness is to help open the door of the will so that the Holy Spirit can enter an unbeliever's life. As a Christian witness I have had opportunities to help open the door of hearts prepared by the Holy Spirit in a number of places when for instance the person spoke another language like Arabic and only halting English. There has usually come a time when I have had to sit back, pray and observe while God brought the person to himself. The secret of an authentic Christian witness is to know when it is God's turn to take over--indeed to recognize that the Lord is active at all times. The real power of Billy Graham, he will tell you himself, is when he stops preaching and lets God do the invitation work through him. Whether one is a new Christian layperson, a seasoned minister or an able teacher of theological formulations, there is an important point in the evangelistic process when one has to turn the inquirer over to God and let the Spirit do the mighty work of bringing that person to God himself. That is one of the times when hard working Christians prove whether they will let God be God or they are in fact idolators of the self. My friends, I say this not merely as a NT interpreter but also as one who teaches evangelism at the graduate level. We need to learn how to let God be God.

### *Theology of the Spirit and Presence*

As John moved to the conclusion of the farewell discourse, he reminded his readers that Jesus had not supplied the disciples with a full-blown theology of the Holy Spirit. To provide such would have been impossible, given the depressed state of the disciples' minds (16:12). They were totally confused by his statement of departure and return (16:16-18). Therefore, instead of a fully enunciated statement about the Holy Spirit, Jesus promised them that the presence of the Spirit would provide them with guidance concerning truth (16:13). Here again then is illustrated a typical Johannine pattern wherein the personal presence of God, Jesus or the Spirit, is stressed rather than the words or ideas about the Godhead. A similar pattern was noted earlier in connection with the theme of believing. It is not that verbal formulas are unimportant for John, but that the reality of God's personhood is something that is basic to John. The Word became flesh (1:14) is not merely a theological statement. It is a confessional reality for John. So, when John talks about the Holy Spirit, it is not merely a statement that we are to affirm. The Spirit is a reality of God's guiding presence that we as Christians are to experience. But relationship to the Spirit is not simply a subjective reality. In

the context of the divine presence in our lives, we begin to understand the related reality of truth (16:13), a truth that glorifies Jesus, our Lord (16:14) and provides security to us as believers that we belong to Christ (16:15).

### *Assurance and the Spirit*

Assurance of salvation, then, does not come from something we generate. It is the result of the Spirit's personal presence in our lives directing our attitudes and perspectives in the ways we think. Moreover, confidence in life and in prayer is not the result of our worthiness before God. It results from sensing the Spirit's presence so that we are able to converse as a consequence of knowing this living God in our lives (16:23-24). Accordingly, as our lives reflect an obedient response to God, prayer becomes a part of the natural communication pattern of a Christian with the indwelling Spirit of God (16:13, 26-28; cf. 15:7-11).

### *Jesus' Model in Prayer*

We, thus, become more and more like Jesus our Lord as the Spirit of God lives in us. This, Jesus, our guide and supporter, as portrayed in chap 17, concluded the farewell discourse with his own model prayer. This prayer provides for us a revealing window into Jesus who is our Savior and our ideal. In this chapter Jesus prayed for the protection of the disciples as he affirmed his earthly role of guarding them while he was with them (17:11-12). He did not pray that Christians would be teleported to some perfect environment where there would be no contact with besmudged humanity. That course of action would have made evangelism impossible. Instead, he prayed that since he would no longer serve as their Paraclete (supporter) his followers would be protected from the evil one in this hurt-laden world (17:13-15).

In addition, he prayed for his followers' holiness (17:17) and rooted this prayer in his own action of sanctifying himself (17:19). Think of the implication of the holy Son of God sanctifying (purifying) himself as a model for us! It is not a question of our Lord's sinfulness but an indication of how much Jesus was willing to do for the disciples in order to be their supporter!

Thirdly, Jesus prayed for the disciples' unity. But he did not limit the prayer to his immediate followers or to the 1st century. His prayer also specifically was focused on us as well (17:20). The reason for his concern of unity was undoubtedly that Jesus knew it is hard to do the mission of Christ ("that the world may believe" 17:21) when Christians are fussing with one another. This year Southern Baptist evangelistic outreach has slumped to an actual low not experienced since the

Second World War. Is our main concern the mission of Christ? Is our "Bold Mission Thrust" more than words?

A final element of Jesus' prayer is his longing for his followers to be with him in glory (17:24). Christians need to remember that Jesus was pictured as longing for the time when his followers would realize their destiny with him. Life in this world is not an end in itself. The reality of salvation involves matters far beyond this present mundane life. Jesus is like an expectant parent who waits for the celebrative homecoming of his children.

The time is coming indeed when all the world will hear the voice of God's Son and come forth from the tombs--some to a resurrection of life but unfortunately others will come to a resurrection of judgment (5:25-29). Human beings must clearly understand that human destiny in John is not limited to a single focus. The good news is directed to the whole world but not everyone will believe in Jesus. To those, however, who believe, who place their lives in a trust relationship with Christ, God gives authority (ἐξουσία) to become children of God (1:12). The destiny of our salvation is to be with Jesus in glory (14:3 and 17:24). That is the ultimate goal of salvation.

### *Conclusion*

Jesus is God's answer to the pain and sin in the world--the Lamb of God (1:29). He came as the one through whom there was given to humanity new life and enlightenment (1:4-5), the one in whom divine grace and truth was fully infleshed (1:14) and the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit (1:33). He is the one who was lifted up in order that whoever would believe in him might experience life eternal (3:14-15) and the one whom the Samaritans confessed to be the Savior of the world (4:42). He is the bread of life (6:35), the living water (7:37), the light of the world (8:12 and 9:5) and the faithful shepherd (10:11) who provides security of life for his believing sheep (10:28). He is the resurrection and the hope for the dead (11:25), the kingly answer to all human expectations (12:13), the model of a life of love (13:34) and the way of God (14:6). He is the foundation vine that enables us to have a fruitful life (15:1-2) and he is the one who sends the Holy Spirit to his followers (16:7).

### *The Purpose of the Death Story*

In the Johannine death story this Jesus stood: totally in control before Judas and the puny band of captors (18:3-8); absolutely authentic in comparison to the inconsistencies of Peter (18:10-11, 15:18, 25:27); genuinely loyal to God in the face of priestly hypocrisy (18:12-14, 19-24, 28 and 19:15) and perfectly serene in the presence of

the compromising weakness of Roman power (18:29-19:16). The purpose of the death story in John as in all the gospel is to make clear to the reader that the sacrificial death of Jesus which is basic to our salvation was not in the hands of mere human beings.

The enemies did not control the death of Jesus according to John. He moved throughout his life toward the determined hour of his death (17:1). When he reached that hour, in John's mind, Jesus himself chose the moment of his death, called out to the world "It is finished!" and then gave up his Spirit (19:30). Thus when the soldiers came to the cross to end the life of the victims in their accustomed manner, Jesus was already dead (19:33). Instead, one soldier pierced his side but the mixture of blood and water that poured from his side was for John a powerful symbolic testimony of the sacrificial death of Jesus (19:34-37). Indeed, even after he died, his body gave witness to the reason for his coming--to be the sacrificial lamb of God for the sin of the world (1:29).

### *The Resurrection and the Spirit*

But the power of God did not leave Jesus in the tomb. As the resurrection morning dawned, it became apparent that Jesus was no longer in the tomb. What was the meaning of that empty tomb? That event signaled a great transition in which this mundane world became a setting where a new pattern of life in the Spirit could emerge. The believers in Jesus were given a new dimension to their lives, a new Paraclete.

The way of the disciples was not to be the way of Mary at the tomb when she tried to grasp on to Jesus and maintain an earthly relationship with the Lord (20:16-17). Such was not to be the way of assurance of Christ's salvation. The function of Jesus in this era of the resurrection was not to remain on earth with his disciples. His role was to ascend to the Father (20:17) and to send them the Spirit, the other Paraclete (14:16).

On the evening of that first Lord's day, the day of the resurrection, Jesus met the disciples and fulfilled his promise. He breathed on them and delivered to them the blessing of the Holy Spirit, their new supporter (20:22). In those decisive moments the risen Jesus also commissioned the disciples to their important role in his work of salvation--the ministry of the forgiveness of sins (20:23).

Resource and commission, these are the bipolar themes of this paper: The Spirit and salvation! As people of the resurrection, the living Jesus summons us' to the ministry of salvation. Go forth then to your calling, oh Christian, in the power of the resurrection, confident that your Paraclete, the Spirit, goes *with you!*

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The Criswell College;

4010 Gaston Ave. Dallas, TX 75246

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Please report any errors to Ted Hildebrandt at: [thildebrandt@gordon.edu](mailto:thildebrandt@gordon.edu)