

### **Note from Pastor Steve**

My family and I will be on vacation for the next two weeks. This is the first true family vacation we have had in a couple of years. I appreciate all of your prayers for my family and parents over the last few months. The road for recovery is still in front of my father. Nevertheless, we have faith that God has great things for my father to do yet.

I believe deep in my heart that God is moving among us. He is working out our salvation and holiness. He loves you dearly and so do I. May God Bless you and His face shine upon you and give you peace and comfort.

His closest companions, those he trusted the most, could not keep awake with him for one hour. His hour of agony was lonely and hard. The cross loomed large and the resurrection was still only a promise. The darkness of the night was superseded only by the darkness of the promise for tomorrow. This is where Jesus found himself in the garden of Gethsemane, praying his heart out to God the Father who he knew loved him but permitted him to be in this lonely valley of decision making without light or support. It appeared that all his systems of support had failed. It seemed that nothing worked and everything had failed.

Some would call the experience the dark night of the soul. Others would call it betrayed in the worst possible way. And those who have gone before tell us that if we live long enough, most of us will know what it is like to have our comfortable and trusted support systems evaporate like a morning fog. When they do, we are often left with empty hands, aching hearts, and troubled minds. Is it the end when all our systems fail? Or is it the mark of a new beginning? When we are the ones with empty hands, troubled hearts, and confused minds, it is hard to think of new beginnings. When the reality of brokenness and darkness is so pervasive, clinging to hope and light can be nearly impossible.

Yet if our feeble faith can reach out to the living God and remember a little of the two thousand years of Christian experience, we discover much that remains strong and sure even after all our systems have failed. Perhaps this is the time when, with anxious hearts and empty hands, we are ready to receive the presence and the power of the One who raised Jesus from the dead. The One who earlier had inspired Mary to say, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). The same One who brought Jesus from the tomb and called Lazarus to life seeks to bring new hope and life to us even when that seems as impossible feat, even for God.—Rueben P. Job.

# The Explanation For Our Difficulties

By: Oswald Chambers

...that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us...

[John 17:21](#)

“If you are going through a time of isolation, seemingly all alone, read John 17 . It will explain exactly why you are where you are— because Jesus has prayed

that you “may be one” with the Father as He is. Are you helping God to answer that prayer, or do you have some other goal for your life? Since you became a disciple, you cannot be as independent as you used to be.

God reveals in John 17 that His purpose is not just to answer our prayers, but that through prayer we might come to discern His mind. Yet there is one prayer which God must answer, and that is the prayer of Jesus— “...that they may be one just as We are one...” (John 17:22). Are we as close to Jesus Christ as that?

God is not concerned about our plans; He doesn't ask, “Do you want to go through this loss of a loved one, this difficulty, or this defeat?” No, He allows these things for His own purpose. The things we are going through are either making us sweeter, better, and nobler men and women, or they are making us more critical and fault-finding, and more insistent on our own way. The things that happen either make us evil, or they make us more saintly, depending entirely on our relationship with God and its level of intimacy. If we will pray, regarding our own lives, “Your will be done” (Matthew 26:42), then we will be encouraged and comforted by John 17, knowing that our Father is working according to His own wisdom, accomplishing what is best. When we understand God's purpose, we will not become small-minded and cynical. Jesus prayed nothing less for us than absolute oneness with Himself, just as He was one with the Father. Some of us are far from this oneness; yet God will not leave us alone until we are one with Him— because Jesus prayed, “...that they all may be one....”



O Lord, you have delivered us from trouble when we were on the cusp of destruction. Embrace us, and give us your secure freedom. Make us ready to tell of your goodness and receive your gifts. In you, we rejoice. Amen.