

GOSPEL OF JOHN SEMINAR

Scripture quoted by permission. All Scriptures under the chapter headings are from THE HOLY BIBLE: NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION unless otherwise marked. Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

Scripture marked (ASV) is from the American Standard Version, 1901.

PERMISSIONS

What you can do:

You can teach this material as many times as you want to as many students as you want for as long as you want.

You can make 10 copies, or 100 copies, or 1,000 copies of the Student's Manual. In other words, you are given blanket permission to make as many copies as you need for your students.

What you cannot do:

You cannot reproduce the Teacher's Manual for anyone but yourself, or others within your church or organization who will be teaching the material.

You may not reproduce the Teacher's Manual, Student's Manual, or the accompanying PowerPoint slides for sale, or for free, to anyone who is not a student.

You may not publish any of these resources online, distribute them in any way, broadcast them on the radio/web, or offer them in any capacity to anyone other than your students.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Lesson 01 – Our Introduction into Sonship	_____
Lesson 02 – We Need More than a Teacher	_____
Lesson 03 – Life in Looking to Jesus	_____
Lesson 04 – The Filling Up of Joy	_____
Lesson 05 – The Fullness of the Sent One	_____
Lesson 06 – The Living Water God's Free Gift	_____
Lesson 07 – Bible Testimony to Jesus—and Man's Refusal of it	_____
Lesson 08 – Night with Jesus	_____
Lesson 09 – The Bread of Immortality	_____
Lesson 10 – Christ's Flesh—the World's Life	_____
Lesson 11 – Come and Drink	_____
Lesson 12 – Jesus Our Light	_____
Lesson 13 – Truth and Liberty	_____
Lesson 14 – The Father Glorifying (Honoring) the Son	_____
Lesson 15 – The Honor Given To Faith	_____
Lesson 16 – Inquiring After Jesus	_____
Lesson 17 – The Great Attraction	_____
Lesson 18 – Light and its Little While	_____
Lesson 19 – Light for the World's Darkness	_____
Lesson 20 – The Judging Word	_____
Lesson 21 – The Revelation of the Father	_____
Lesson 22 – The Abiding Comforter	_____
Lesson 23 – The Mighty Comforter	_____
Lesson 24 – The Divine Legacy of Peace	_____
Lesson 25 – Christ in Heaven—the Church on Earth	_____
Lesson 26 – Tribulation, Peace, and Victory	_____
Lesson 27 – The Declaration of the Father's Name	_____
Lesson 28 – Ritualism and the Cross	_____
Lesson 29 – The Greater Sin	_____
Lesson 30 – The View at Calvary	_____
Lesson 31 – Christ's Work in Heaven—and Ours on Earth	_____
Lesson 32 – The Tender Love of the Risen Christ	_____

Lesson One

Our Introduction into Sonship

"Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." – John 1:12-13

The evangelist is speaking of the Christ, the Christ coming into the world, yet rejected by the world; coming to Israel, yet rejected by Israel. Then he reminds us that the rejection was not universal. He was acknowledged by some, however few; and these some were made partakers of no common honor; yet they were by nature no better than others; owing all that they received—to the sovereign God alone.

I. THE HONOR.

To become "children of God"—not merely by adoption, but by birth. It is the word used in Romans 8:16—"the Spirit bears witness that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs;" and in 1st John 3:10—"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called sons of God!" On our side there is sonship—on God's side fatherhood. Sonship is (1.) higher; (2.) nearer; (3.) more blessed; (4.) more glorious, than animal kind. There is sonship in the angels, sonship in unfallen man; but this is beyond those; resting on a different foundation, introducing us into more intimate communion; making us partakers of the divine nature; partakers of Christ; one in nature, privilege, honor, dignity with Him who is "the Son of God." This is the honor to which God is calling us—us who were children of wrath, children of the evil one! He invites us to this. He beseeches us to receive the honor, the dignity, the blessedness; to accept his divine fatherhood, to enter in on the divine sonship! Such is the love of God for us!

II. THE ONE WHO GRANTS IT.

It is Christ himself. Elsewhere it is the Father; here it is the Son. The Son makes us sons! "He gave!"—the sonship is Christ's free gift. For all gifts are in his hands. "I give unto them eternal life." He gives the living water; He gives the bread of life, which is his flesh. So here he gives the right or power of sonship. It is not, however; simply the sonship itself that is spoken

of here; but the right to it—the power. This right, or power, or title, He has purchased for us—for those who had no right, nor power, nor title—He has so earned it, and so secured it, that it becomes a lawful and righteous title; and being so, it is secure and eternal. This He holds out, presents to us, as his own and the Father's free gift. Become sons of God is the message of the gospel! Not, as some say, you are sons now, act on this, and be happy. But become sons! Take the right, the title, so dearly bought, so freely given. It is not merely, Come unto me, and I will give you rest; but, Come unto me—and I will make you sons!

III. THE WAY TO ATTAIN IT.

There is no bargain, no price; no terms, no conditions; yet there is an appointed way; and he who will have the sonship, must have it in this one way. This way is "receiving Him;" and this receiving him is explained as "believing in his name."

(1.) Receiving Him.

Doing the reverse of what Israel had done; accepting Him as "the Word;" the "light;" the "life;" the "Son;" the "Christ;" the Messiah sent of God; accepting and owning Him for all that God had announced Him to be; confessing with Peter, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God;" with Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

(2.) Believing on His name.

A.) Believing, that is, receiving God's testimony to Him, and his own testimony to Himself.

B.) Believing on his name. We do not need to confine this to his actual name Jesus, but to all that has been revealed concerning Him; his person, and character, and work. We get to know Him through his name—through that revelation of Him which we find in the gospels. There we find Him and his name.

Accepting all that has been testified concerning Him; and joining with that the promise given of sonship to everyone who accepts, we become sons of God. Faith in Him and in His name identifies us with Him who is the Son of God; and as He is, so are we in the world.

IV. THE CHANGE THAT TAKES PLACE.

We are "born," and so by birth become sons. We are born into the heavenly family; begotten again unto a lively hope. This is more than adoption, it is birth. As to this birth, the evangelist first tells us what it is not, before he tells us what it is.

(1.) We are not born of blood.

Not of natural descent; not of circumcision. Human blood has nothing to do with our divine birth. We are not sons by nature.

(2.) Not of the will of the flesh.

Not by natural generation. The flesh, or old nature, has nothing to do with the new birth. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. The flesh neither wills to make us, nor can make us sons.

(3.) Not of the will of man.

Not by adoption. No man, and no will of man, whether self or another, can produce this new birth. Man can only adopt children like himself; children of wrath.

Then he adds, "but born of God"; out of Him; by means of Him; through His will; His power. He alone can make us sons: can choose the honor for us, and us for the honor. It is He who produces sons; it is He who calls them to this honorable name: "Of his own will He begat us with the word of truth (James 1:18). His will and His grace do not contradict each other. Go to Him for sonship. Receive His Son, and He will make you sons. "He who believes that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God."

Lesson Two

We Need More than a Teacher

He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him." – John 3:2

We take Nicodemus as one of the best specimens of "religious humanity"; educated, moral, of high position and culture; a strict observer of religious rites, and seasons, and ordinances; a "ruler of the Jews," a "master of Israel," and a believer in Israel's promised Messiah.

He ought to have fully known the Messiah's errand, and to have recognized Him at once when He came. But even Nicodemus, this well-instructed religious ruler and master, one of the leaders of the straightest sect, fails to understand Him. He approaches Him only as a teacher. He accepts Him as that, but as nothing more. Like the rest of his nation and race, he was in quest of "knowledge"; and for such he went to Jesus. Like our first parents, he saw that "the tree was good for food, and pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise"; this was all. He had no deeper sense of need. "We know you are a teacher who has come from God," was the indication of his state of mind; it showed how little his conscience was at work; how superficial, as well as self-righteous, were his views as to his own spiritual condition. He did not know that he was poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked.

Accordingly, we have in him a specimen of man—educated, moral, religious man—unconscious of his own true need, and blind to God's provision for that need.

I. PEOPLE ARE NOT CONCIOUS OF THEIR TRUE NEED.

Nicodemus, with all his religious advantages, has not fathomed the depth of his own spiritual needs. He knows that he needs something; but he does not know how much; nor does he know what the real nature of his great need is. He needs a teacher—that is all! He thinks that will suffice. But he doesn't go any farther than this. He thinks there is but one empty chamber in his house; unconscious that all are empty, or if filled at all, filled with that

which must be cast out and cast away. He thinks there is but a slight bruise in one of his limbs, when there is poison in every vein; when the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. He needs pardon; yet he is unconscious of condemnation. He needs reconciliation; yet he is unconscious of distance, and wrath, and doom. He needs life; yet he is unconscious of the death in which he lies. He does not know what sin is; what enmity to God is; what distance from God is; what it is to be lost; what it is to be without the favor and love of God; what the world is in which he dwells, and of which he forms a part; what Satan is, his great adversary. He has no idea of the extent of his ruin, and the greatness of his danger. He does not see that, apart from hell and wrath, the simple absence of God from the heart would be unutterable wretchedness. He does not see that simply to be left unchanged and unconverted would be of itself hell. But of all the evil of sin, the evil of his own heart, he is utterly unconscious. He is not in the least alive to his need—either as to its nature or its extent.

Yes, humanity is unconscious of its ruin! The human heart does not know the emptiness that has been made in it by the absence of God; it does not know the malignity of one single sin—one single act of disobedience, one moment's insubordination of the will, one moment's ceasing to love God with all the heart and soul. Unconsciousness of his own need; insensibility to his own sin; palsy of the conscience—this is man's great evil. To remove this unconsciousness, and to impart true consciousness in regard to these things, is the first great work of the Holy Spirit in the soul. That this unconsciousness is voluntary and deliberate we cannot doubt. This is the aggravation of the evil; this is the consummation of the guilt. Man shrinks from knowing the worst of himself; no, he refuses to know it. He willfully shuts his eyes to the nature and to the extent of his spiritual evil. He tries to make himself believe that his case is not so very serious after all. He takes pride in viewing himself as being a little in the wrong, needing some help, some light, some teaching; but beyond that he refuses to go. That far Nicodemus went when he came to Jesus; but at that time he was not prepared to go farther. But the Lord led him on.

II. PEOPLE ARE OFTEN BLIND TO GOD'S PROVISION OF THEIR NEED.

The One to whom Nicodemus came was God's provision for man's need. It was the provision of love and bounty; "He spared not his Son." But man does not appreciate this provision, because he does not apprehend his

own need. He thinks he needs a teacher—that is all. Not a deliverer; not a priest; not a healer; not a cleanser; not a renewer—only a teacher! Not a divine teacher; only a teacher come from God. God's provision for our need assumes that our need is unspeakably great; so great as only to be supplied by one who is divine; a divine teacher (or prophet), a divine priest, a divine king. Man shuts his eyes to this. He refuses to interpret the provision which God has made for him, and in that infinite provision, to read the nature and extent of his own need. He shrinks from the acceptance of a Savior, not willing to see that he really needs one. He thinks he can do with less than salvation; he cannot think himself wholly lost. Yet what is the meaning of God sending His own Son, if less than salvation was intended; if less than incarnation will do, less than blood, less than death, less than resurrection? Oh let us understand the greatness of God's provision for us, and in that greatness, read at once our death and our life, our condemnation and our deliverance. Jesus met Nicodemus at once with the necessity of being born again. Mere teaching will not do; there must be the new birth; not a few new and good ideas—but regeneration! Nothing less. How this astounded the religious Jew. You must be born again.

Yet one thing in Nicodemus is praiseworthy. He came directly to Jesus and dealt with Him face to face. So, say we to everyone. Go and do the same.

Lesson Three

Life in Looking to Jesus

"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." – John 3:14-15

I. THE HISTORY.

The narrative begins with Israel's sin. It is the old sin of murmuring; distrust; dislike of God's provision; discontent with his dealings; preference of Egypt to the prospect of Canaan; disbelief of God's love, and denial of his faithfulness. And all this at the close of their forty years' desert sojourn! Forty years of the manna, of the water, of the pillar-cloud, and of all the love which these imply—had left them still the same! The narrative proceeds with Israel's punishment. It was death; death from the hand of the Lord; a death of agony; a death by poison and fire; death by the instrumentality of serpents, which would not fail to remind them of the serpent of Paradise, by which our first parents were poisoned. The punishment was so ordered as to be the means of symbolizing the remedy. Out of their destroyers, the symbol of health is constructed. The image of destruction becomes the emblem of health and deliverance.

The remedy was simple, complete, divine. The image of their destroyers in brass, lifted up on a banner-pole, so as to be visible to all. So sin, punishment, and remedy were all brought into view at once. They were reminded of their sin; they read their punishment; they received the cure.

The application of the cure was as simple as the cure itself. They had no hand in it; nothing to pay for it; nothing to do; no distance to walk; no effort to put forth. The cure was wholly of God; its power was resistless; no strength of disease could withstand it; however near death they might be, it mattered not. They looked and were cured.

II. THE SYMBOL.

"All these happened unto them as examples." It is this example, or type, or emblem that our Lord here indicates; it is this that we are to read.

The sin in both cases is much the same; rebellion against God; unbelief; distrust; making God a liar; refusal to believe His word, or to receive His love. Of this sin the punishment is death; death by the hand of him who has the power of death, the old serpent, the devil; certain, agonizing, burning death; the fire that is never quenched; the everlasting burnings; our veins filled with deadly poison, and every part racked with pain. The sin is not the less hateful for being unfelt; the punishment not the less deadly, because we may be insensible to its deadliness.

III. THE CURE.

(1.) Christ made sin for us.

The deliverer takes the likeness of the destroyer. The Son of God not merely becomes the Son of man, but He assumes the likeness of sinful flesh. Not sinful flesh, nor a sinful nature; but still flesh—true flesh; true manhood—manhood under the curse, in its weakness, frailty, and mortality. Moses was not commanded to take an actual serpent, a dead serpent, and hang it on the pole; that would have implied that Christ was actually sinful; but he is to do the nearest thing to this, to make the image of a serpent, formed out of brass—such brass as the brazen altar and brazen laver were made of. As Christ was represented by the emblem of a goat on the day of atonement—a goat, the figure of the wicked on the left of the Judge—so He is here represented by a brazen serpent; "made a curse," (2 Cor. 5:21) "made sin for us." Therefore on the cross, we see at once our condemnation and our pardon, our sickness and our cure, our destroyer and our deliverer. We see Christ carrying up to the cross our sin, our punishment, our enemy, and nailing them all to that cross along with Himself. God inflicts death on Him as if He were the sinner, as if He were man's enemy, as if He were the cursed one.

(2.) Christ lifted up.

The lifting up of the serpent on a pole was necessary for Israel's cure; so the lifting up of Christ on the cross was for ours. He was lifted up,

A.) As a sacrifice.

He was laid on the altar. The cross was the altar on which the Lamb of God was placed.

B.) As a criminal.

It was a cursed place: "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree." There He hung as a wrongdoer, the Just for the unjust!

C.) As an object visible to all.

The serpent was lifted up that Israel might see it; so Christ was lifted up that all men might see Him; that He might be the most visible object in creation.

(3.) Christ giving life.

He hangs in the place of death, yet He gives life. He delivers from death by dying. Life streams out, like rivers of water, from that center, the cross. The cross is the tree of life. There He hangs—the life-giving One; the healing One; the attractive One; the loving One. "Look unto Me," is the voice coming from Him there. We are healed, not by working, or praying, or striving, but looking. Israel's physicians could do nothing; the look at the serpent did it all. So it is in looking that the cure comes to us. There is health, there is life at the cross. We get them simply in looking; all may look. "Whoever," is the wide message—"whoever believes,"—has eternal life.

Lesson Four

The Filling Up of Joy

"The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete." – John 3:29

These are among "the last words" of John the Baptist just as he is about to step into Herod's prison. His was a brief life and ministry, yet he was the greatest among the prophets. His last words carry us back to *Jacob's* (Genesis 49), "I have waited for your salvation"; to *Moses* (Deuteronomy 18:15), "A prophet shall the Lord raise"; to *David's* (Psalm 72:20), "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended"; to *Simeon's* (Luke 2:29), "Now let your servant depart in peace." They are the words of the martyr about to enter the prison, and to lay his neck under the sword of the executioner. They are the last words of the shortest, but perhaps most important ministry on record.

They are an answer to the jealous appeal of his own disciples. Until now he had been the man of the time; all crowded to him. Now the crowds were leaving him for Jesus. This tried the faith of his disciples, and stirred up their jealousy. "Rabbi, the One you testified about, and who was with you across the Jordan, is baptizing—and everyone is flocking to Him." (verse 26), were the words of disappointment and envy. But John has no such feeling; nor had ever said anything to produce or foster it (verse 28).

In his answer he first tells who he is not. "I am not the Christ." Why wonder at the crowds now going past me? "I am not the bridegroom," the bride belongs not to me; why wonder at the crowds flocking to the Bridegroom? Is not this just what you should expect and rejoice in? Next he tells us who he is. He is the, fore sent one. This is all he can say for himself. His honor is not his own, but comes from Him whom he heralds. He is the friend of the Bridegroom; the groomsman; like the virgins in attendance on the bride. As the fore sent one he has been looking out for the Christ; should he not then rejoice that He has come? As the friend of the Bridegroom, he is watching for the Bridegroom's arrival; should he not rejoice when he hears His voice? As a result his errand terminates; his great mission is consummated; his joy fulfilled; his life no longer needed.

John's feelings are therefore just what we would have expected of a true man, a true friend, a true forerunner in such circumstances.

I. NEGATIVELY, they are:

(1.) Not disappointment.

His mission has not failed; he is not a disappointed man. There is no bitterness in his words.

(2.) Not distrust.

As if he did not know where all this would lead; as if he dreaded the result.

(3.) Not envy or jealousy.

Whatever jealousy might be in his disciples, there was none in him. He did not envy.

(4.) Not pride.

It is not wounded pride that speaks in him. He is the forerunner of the meek and lowly One; and pride has been cast out. Self-love and self-esteem have ceased. Self has passed away in the presence of the Son of God. He is content to be nothing.

II. POSITIVELY, they are the feelings of one.

(1.) Who admires and loves the Bridegroom.

His admiration and love are true. For this reason the Bridegroom is ever uppermost in his thoughts. There is no attractiveness, but in him.

(2.) Who has been eagerly looking for Him.

In John we have the true personification of one "waiting for Christ," "looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God." And when He for whom he is looking comes, his joy is full.

(3.) Who has actually found Him.

"I found him whom my soul loves." "We have found the Messiah." John has found him, and rejoices.

(4.) Whose delight is in His voice.

He long listened; it came at length; "the voice of my beloved!" He stands and listens to the conversation of the marriage party—especially of the bridegroom. It is His voice that he delights in. It is communication with Him that is his joy; "he stands and listens."

(5.) Whose joy is in Him alone.

Apart from Jesus joy does not exist for John. He has gained a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

(6.) Who is content to be nothing?

"He must increase; I must decrease." This is no hardship. He is glad to vanish and give way to the greater and more glorious one.

In his answer we have the full acknowledgment of what John is, and of what he knows Jesus to be. What are we?

We are friends of the bridegroom, if believers in the name of Jesus. Friends! Like John. Like the virgins who went forth to meet Him. By nature we are friends of the world. We break with it, and become friends of the Bridegroom. We hear a good report of this Bridegroom, his love, his beauty, his glory—and so we surrender ourselves to Him. We accept the Father's testimony to Him; the Holy Spirit's testimony to his person and his work. We join ourselves to the number of his friends.

If "friends" (as Jesus himself calls us) then the following things will mark us as they did John.

III. ADMIRATION FOR CHRIST AS THE BRIDEGROOM.

We admire His person, His life, His work; all these separately, and all of them together. We count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. We love and admire; we admire and love. The more we know, the more we love; the more often we gaze, the more we admire. What do you think of Christ? Do you admire Him? Do you love Him? We

love Him because He first loved us; yes, loves us to the end, with the love that passes knowledge.

IV. DELIGHT IN HIS VOICE.

John stood and listened as one entranced. He heard (as well as saw) no man except Jesus. The tones of his voice are sweet; but the words are unutterably precious; each word a gem, a treasure, a joy. This is my beloved Son, hear Him! Yes, hear Him in these days of uproar and confusion; hear his voice amid the chaos of human views. Say to Him, "Let me hear your voice." His "speech is lovely"; "honey and milk are under his tongue"; his lips "drop sweet smelling myrrh"; his "lips drop as the honeycomb"; "into his lips grace is poured."

V. JOY IN HIS GLORY.

He has now "increased"; He is crowned with glory and honor. This is our joy; yes, in this our joy is fulfilled. He is now blessed and glorified. And even more so when He comes again. We take joy in what He is; we take joy in what He shall be. He comes to be glorified in his saints and admired in all those who believe. Behold the Bridegroom comes, let us go forth to meet him!

Lesson Five

The Fullness of the Sent One

For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. – John 3:34-35

John came as a witness to Jesus—"to bear witness of the Light" (1:7, 8). Marvelous office and honor! A spark to bear witness of the Son! He does his work well, bearing true, full, blessed testimony to the Son of God! He bore this testimony, that all men through him might believe (1:7). Yet who believed his report? "No man receives his testimony." They honored him, flocked to him, spoke well of him—but received not the One whom he testified of.

Let us listen to John's testimony concerning the Messiah, the Word made flesh, that we may receive it, and receive Him of whom he testifies.

I. JESUS IS THE SENT OF GOD.

The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. He comes to us on a mission from the Father; He comes not for himself, nor does he speak of himself. It is with the Father's voice that He speaks; the Father's errand that He discharges. What a link that word "sent" forms between us and God, between earth and heaven, between the sinner and the love of God. God sends Him, and He comes; He comes to earth; He comes to us; messenger, ambassador, servant. Angels are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister." But in a higher and more peculiar sense is the Son who is "sent," sent by the Father. O loving Sender, and O blessed Sent One! Let us gladly receive the message, the messenger, and Him who sends.

II. JESUS IS THE SPEAKER OF THE WORDS OF GOD.

He has come to speak; not to keep silence; to speak words which a man can understand; words with a human voice, and in human language. Yet the words are the words of God; and the speaker is from heaven; He is divine; and His revelation is divine; and His words are divine—divine though human. Let us listen to this speaker of the words of God. He speaks: "Repent"; "You must be born again"; "God so loved the world"; "I

am the light of the world"; "Come unto me." So He spoke on earth; and so also He speaks from heaven: "Behold I stand," etc. For in heaven He is still the speaker of the words of God. "Hear, and your soul shall live." The words of God are perfect; they are grace and truth; filled with love and wisdom. Let us listen to this glorious speaker, and we shall find health and peace.

III. JESUS IS THE POSSESSOR OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The fullness of the Spirit is with Him, and in Him; the Spirit "without limit" has been given to Him. The Word made flesh is the Messiah. The anointed One. Through the eternal Spirit—He spoke, and acted, and lived, and died. The Spirit without measure is given Him. This fullness He possesses for us; for His church; He is the possessor and the dispenser of the Holy Spirit. Let us welcome Him, and deal with Him as such. It is for us that the Father has filled Him. There is enough in His fullness for us. We do not need to be empty so long as He is full, nor poor so long as He is rich.

IV. JESUS IS THE OBJECT OF THE FATHER'S LOVE.

"The Father loves the Son." This love of the Father to the Son is the greatest of all. There is none like it. It is perfect, infinite, eternal, divine, passing all knowledge. Never before had there been such an object for the Father to love; so glorious, so loveable; so full of all created and uncreated excellencies. This love of the Father to the Son, is the foundation of His treatment of us. He deals with us according to this love. It is the greatness of this love that makes Him so desirous of blessing us; because in blessing us, He is honoring the beloved Son. Therefore He gratifies his love to the Son by blessing us. What security for blessing does this give us! It is not simply His love to us that makes Him long to bless us—but his love to his own Son. We might suspect His love to ourselves, and say, How can we count upon His blessing? But we cannot doubt His love to his Son, so that we can boldly say, We are sure of blessing, because we are sure that the Father loves the Son. Let these words sink into our hearts, "The Father loves the Son."

V. JESUS IS THE HEIR OF ALL THINGS.

The Father has given all things into his hand. He is head over all things; He is Lord of all; He is King of kings; He is judge of all. He has put all things under His feet, and left nothing that is not put under Him. He is the head of

principalities and powers. This universal authority and dominion is the consequence of the Father's love. It is in this way that God honors Him, and shows that He is the man whom He delights to honor. All things are given into His hand, because He is the beloved of the Father. Nothing in heaven, or earth, or hell is beyond His sway. He is the blessed and only Ruler.

Learn then,

(1.) A sinner's REFUGE.

Christ Jesus—the sent of God; the speaker of the words of God's love; the possessor of all power. Go straight to him, O man! There is safety in Him—but in no other. He is *willing* to bless; *able* to save to the uttermost. He can deliver you from every sin and enemy. You have all in Him. *Go to Him now; as you are; with all your worthlessness and evil.*

(2.) A saint's SECURITY.

The church of God, and each saint of God, is daily exposed to peril. All things are against us. But in Him whom the Father loved we have a strong tower, a refuge in the time of trouble. Who shall prevail against those whom Christ has undertaken to protect?

Lesson Six

The Living Water God's Free Gift

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." – John 4:10

SPECIAL NOTES:

(1) The three Persons of the Godhead are here.

The expression "the gift of God" shows the Father; the living water is the Holy Spirit (John 7:36), and the Son of God is the speaker.

(2) The love of God shines brightly in this verse.

The love of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—love to the chief of sinners—love which seeks and saves the lost. Every word here is love; love that many waters cannot quench; love which passes knowledge. Sin abounds—but grace super-abounds.

(3) The interest which God takes in individual souls is seen vividly here.

This is Godhead stooping down to visit and care for one solitary soul; it is the good Shepherd casting his eye on a stray sheep by the wayside, and stooping to pick it up and carry it off on his shoulders.

(4) The way in which God meets with the sinner is shown us here.

God deals with the sinner alone, and face to face; God speaks to the sinner and the sinner speaks to God. There must always be this close personal dealing, this individual transaction of the soul's business for eternity, this settlement of the question between man and God; not in a crowd—but alone; not through the medium or intervention of another—friend, or priest, or church—but directly and alone.

(5) The time and place and circumstances of such a meeting are brought before us.

Any day, any hour, will do. Not the set hour of morning or evening sacrifice—but any time will do. And any place will do. Not the temple merely, or the closet—but beside a well, as here, or a sycamore tree (as Zaccheus), a tax-gatherer's office (as Matthew). Yes; any time, any place, will do for Jesus. His grace is not restricted by temple walls, nor tied to ceremonies, nor limited to hours. Samaria, Jericho, Tyre, Jerusalem are the same to Him. The temple, the highway, the hill-side, the beach, the synagogue, the house, the boat, the graveyard, are all alike to Him and to his grace.

The meeting looks like a chance one—but it is not. In God's eternal purpose that place had been fixed upon—that well. And Jesus comes to it as the fulfiller of the Father's will, the accomplisher of his purposes, in the minutest jot and tittle. He was seeking one of those whom the Father had given Him, when He traveled that day, and sat down at length, wearied, by the well. It was not the woman seeking Christ—but Christ seeking the woman. She came for one thing—He gives another. She came in quest of the earthly—He gives the heavenly. She did not know Him nor care for Him—He knew and cared for her. In spite of sin, and unbelief, and hard heartedness, He draws near to her, lays hold of her, wins her to Himself, and then, after all his weariness, rests in his love.

Yes; Christ was weary, and as a result of that weariness He rests. Do we find our rest where He found his? He was hungry and thirsty, and here He found both food and drink. Do we satisfy our hunger and quench our thirst where He did? The doing of the Father's will, the gathering in of the lost one, was to Him rest, and food, and drink. Is this how we find refreshment? Is this how we eat and drink?

When Jacob dug this well, how little he thought of what was to be transacted here in the ages to come; who was to sit here; what eternal words were to be spoken here; and that here a soul was to be saved, and from this spot joy was to be caused in heaven. In building a sanctuary we naturally think of who may be born again here; but who, in digging a well, would ever think of such a thing, or dream of inscribing on it, "this man and that man was born again here."

I. THE GIFT OF GOD.

God has more gifts than one. Christ is his gift; the Holy Spirit is his gift; eternal life is his gift. Sometimes two of these gifts are combined; "This is the true God and eternal life"; "in Him was life"; "I am the life." So that we may take the words here as having this reference, "If you knew God's gift of eternal life in me—me who now ask for water—you would have asked of me, and I would have given you that Holy Spirit, who is the living water, and through whom the eternal life is poured into the dead soul." Yes; the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord! "This is the record, that God has given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son!"

II. THE BRINGER OF THE GIFT.

This weary, hungry, thirsty Jew, is the Bringer of the glorious gift. In Him is life! All fullness of life dwells in Him. He, this Jesus, this man like ourselves, He has come down from the Father filled with this eternal life for us. Could it be brought nearer? Placed more within our reach than it is in Him?

III. MANKIND'S IGNORANCE OF THE GIFT.

The woman did not know the gift nor its Bringer. She had no sense of its value, or of her need of Him. The life that now is she knew—but not the life that is to come. The water of Jacob's well she prized—but not the water from the eternal well. *Such is man everywhere! He knows not God; nor the love of God; nor the gift of God; nor the Son of God.*

IV. GOD'S WAY OF BESTOWING HIS GIFTS.

"You would have *asked*—and He would have *given*." This is all! How simple, how easy, how near, how free! Living water! This is what the Son of God has to bestow. Living water! That is the Holy Spirit (John 7:39). For blessing we must have to do with Jesus. It is in communicating with Him that we receive what we need. There must be direct *application* on our part; direct *bestowal* on his. But how close at hand is this divine life! How welcome are we to have it from the hands of the Son of God. This living water He would pour into us at once, and without upbraiding. Ask, and you shall receive. "I will give to him who is thirsty."

There is something in the expression "if you knew," that makes the gracious announcement here yet more gracious. It is the same as in Luke

19, "if you had known," or "would that you had known." It is the Savior yearning over the needy and the thirsty. Oh that you would come to me for living water!

This is one out of the many memorable texts often quoted and preached upon; such as, "God so loved the world"; "Come unto me"; "It is a faithful saying"; "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Any of these might well be enough to win the human heart; how much more all of them together.

Lesson Seven

Bible Testimony to Jesus—and Man's Refusal of it

"You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life." – John 5:39-40

In opposition to the denial and disbelief of the Jews, the Son of God produces his witnesses. He has many—but He calls only four—John the Baptist, his own miracles, the Father, the Scriptures. These all testify of Him before men, that they may believe and be saved. It is the last of these that we have to consider, as here put by our Lord, to meet the unbelief of Israel and to establish his own claims.

I. THE SCRIPTURES.

God has "spoken" ("thus says the Lord"); and God has "written" ("it is written"). That which He has spoken and written make up what we call "the Bible," or "the Book," which Paul calls "Scripture" (2 Timothy 3:16), which our Lord here calls "the Scriptures," or the "Writings." He has spoken by human lips and written by human pens, yet all that is given to us is divine, superhuman, supernatural. The *thoughts* are the thoughts of God, and the *words* are the words of God. That our Lord should refer to them to prove his Sonship and his Messiahship, shows the stress which He laid upon them, the divine accuracy which He ascribed to them. It is with confidence in their accuracy that He appeals to them. If the words are inaccurate or unintelligible; if they are but the results of man's efforts to clothe divine thoughts in human language, then the demonstration goes for nothing, the proof fails; Jesus may not, after all, be what the words imply that He is—the Son of the Highest. If the words are not of God, there is no security for the thoughts; if the words are not correct, the thoughts extracted from these words are not to be relied upon as God's; and if the words be incorrect, and the thoughts doubtful, we have no "Scripture," no "Bible." The one fragment of the supposed superhuman has been stripped of its divine glory.

II. THE SEARCH.

The Jews were great searchers of the Scriptures. They had profound reverence for the word of God. They never made any question as to its

accuracy or verbal inspiration. They were almost superstitious in the way they affixed meanings, not to words only—but to letters. Our Lord appeals to them as searchers of the word—careful and reverential searchers of the word. They had, in truth, no other book to search. Their literature was almost wholly divine. We are overwhelmed with books; and so in the matter of "searching" we come far behind old Israel. It would be well for us to study, to search, to reverence the book of God—the one fragment of the supernatural which exists on earth—the record of divine utterances, the model of the mind of God.

III. THE REASON FOR THE SEARCH.

"You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life." It was not in mere curiosity that Israel searched the Word, though they did so in much ignorance and unbelief. They had some idea of the hidden treasure that was there. They knew, or professed to know, that not only was knowledge there—but life was there; that God had given them his book, that by it they might obtain life. Yes; in that book is life—eternal life. It is the revelation of life—of the living one—of Him who said not only, I am the way and the truth—but the Life. We search in this book for life! Other things, no doubt, are there; but this especially. For other things we dig into this wondrous mine of heavenly gold; but above all for this—the life that is deposited there. Its truths are living truths; its words are living words—"The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life."

IV. THE DIVINE TESTIMONY.

"These are the Scriptures that testify about me." No other writing contains a testimony to Messiah. There are many books, and many speakers; and in their utterances we hear of many gods and many lords; but only one book contains a testimony to the Christ of God. We have philosophers, poets, logicians, orators—but no witnesses for the Son of God. Augustine admired Cicero—but after his conversion he lost his relish, for the name of Christ was not there. Only of one book can it be said "it testifies of me." Yes; the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy and of all Scripture. The theme of the book is Messiah; the seed of the woman; the seed of Abraham; the star out of Jacob; the prophet like unto Moses; the righteous One; the tender plant; the righteous King. It is one unbroken testimony to the Christ and his sacrificial work that we get in this volume. The testifier is the Holy

Spirit (John 15:26). It is His voice we hear throughout Scripture, speaking of Jesus. It is His testimony that is presented to us as the resting place for our faith; for when God bids us believe, He gives the fullest and surest evidence for us to rest our faith upon. Wherever, then, we turn in Scripture, we find Jesus. There He is all in all; the alpha and the omega of every book. It is the light of Jesus which is diffused through every page. It is the glory of Jesus that we find in all its revelations. He is everywhere in that volume; and He is so in connection with eternal life; in connection with the undoing of the sentence of death passed against our race. The first Adam comes before us at the beginning; but he is the introducer of death; with his name and doings only death is linked. But he soon passes away, and in his place there comes the "second man," the "last Adam," the giver of life, no—*the life!* And over all Scripture the quickening, life-giving fragrance of His name is diffused. Christ and life; life in Christ; Christ our life—these form the very essence, the sum and theme, of the Scriptures.

V. HUMAN PERVERSITY.

"You refuse to come to me to have life." Here is rejection of the Christ; refusal of the life; deliberate standing aloof from the fountain of life; professing to seek the life, yet disjoining that life from the living one; turning away from that living one, when in the form of true humanity he stood before them presenting to them this life of God; pressing to their parched lips the full cup of living water from God's eternal fountain.

(1.) There is life for the dead.

The Bible assumes that the world is dead; that it needs life; that nothing less than life will meet its case. It speaks of life; proclaims life; reveals its fullness. O dead in sin, there is life for you!

(2.) This life is in Christ.

Only in Him. None anywhere else. In Him is life, and the life is the light of men. All else is death. "The last Adam was made a quickening spirit" (1 Corinthians 15:45).

(3.) Life is to be had by coming to Christ.

'Come and live,' He says, just as He said, 'Come and rest.'
Communion with Him is the only source of life. Nothing more is

needed; nothing less will do. Are not men trying to do with something less than this? Something less than conversion, less than the Spirit's work, less than the blood and righteousness and salvation of the Son of God!

(4.) Lack of life is the result of our own deliberate refusal to deal with Christ.

We need not try to throw the blame on God's sovereignty or the need of divine power. These do not alter our responsibility, nor make it less true, that we have deliberately rejected the Christ of God and refused his gift of life.

Lesson Eight

Night with Jesus

"When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat and set off across the lake for Capernaum. By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them." – John 6:16-17

Many a dark night has rested over this sea of Tiberias unrecorded. Many a storm has swept it; many an earthquake has convulsed it; many a wave has risen and fallen over its blue expanse; many a scene and hour of danger its steep hills have witnessed—all unrecorded; passing away in silence. But here is one night, of which a record has been kept; one blast written down in history; one storm made memorable forever. At what exact part of that lake the occurrence took place we do not know; it must have been somewhere towards the north, where Capernaum lay. Let us read this brief record, and learn its everlasting lesson.

I. IT WAS NIGHT.

The sun had long set over the western steeps of Tiberias. Darkness was over all. The distant twinkling of the city lights in Capernaum or Chorazin was all which broke the gloom. Yes, it was night, and the disciples were alone. The Master was away. Jesus had not come to them. This made it double night.

II. IT WAS NIGHT AT SEA.

Not indeed a sea broad and wide, like that which swept round Jonah, and wrecked Paul; but deep and wide enough for danger. They had left the green slopes, where they had been all day with their Master (5:10). To shorten their journey, by cutting off the north-eastern bend of the lake, they had taken ship; but night had overtaken them before they had gone far; midnight had fallen, and they must row through the thick gloom over the eight or ten miles which lay between them and the northern shore. Besides, they were alone. Jesus had not come! They had looked for his joining them before they embarked; and they were looking for Him still, expecting Him by some other boat; but He had not arrived. To be without Him on land, and by day—was sad; but to be without Him at sea, and by night—was sadder still.

III. IT WAS A NIGHT OF TOIL.

They had rowed some four miles—but they had as many more before them; and it was severe toil after the incessant bustle of such a day as they had spent in feeding the multitudes. They were alone. The Master's presence would have cheered them; and, no doubt, as He had often done, He would have taken the oar along with them, weary as He might be. But He was not with them. They were toiling at the oar in this dark night, and Jesus had not come to them. This made their labor twice as hard, and their weariness twice as sore.

IV. IT WAS A NIGHT OF DANGER.

The storm had broken loose, and was rushing down from the mountains upon them; the waves were heaving round them and dashing over them. Peril encompassed them. Perhaps they were saying to each other, had the Master been here this storm would not have arisen, as if they would reproach Him for delay, forgetful that *distance* was nothing to Him. They were alone in this tempest. Jesus had not come to them. This made the storm seem more terrible. Had He been with them, even though He were asleep on the pillow, it would have calmed and cheered them. But He had not come!

How much trouble and despondency may have filled the hearts of the disciples on that night, we do not know. The words certainly imply something of these—"By now it was dark, and Jesus had not yet joined them." His delay was a trial of faith. It looked neglectful and unkind. They might be ready to say, "Master, don't You care that we are perishing?" But He loves to test, not break, their faith. He will not test it beyond what they can bear. He tries it only to strengthen it.

Let us look at these words in their more general aspect, as relating to the history of each saint and of the church at large.

(1.) Night.

All have their nights. The sinner's history is all one long starless night. But the saint has his night too; his night of sorrow, of bereavement, of pain. The Church, too, has her night. She is "not of the night"; but she has "nights." Darkness, tempest, danger, are around about. Persecution, poverty, desertion; "famine, and nakedness, and peril,

and sword." She has had many such nights, and will have them until her King arrives. There shall be no night then. But there is night now.

(2.) Night without Jesus.

The sinner's night is altogether without Jesus; no, this is the very gloom of its darkness. But the saint has nights in which Jesus seems distant. "By night upon my bed I sought Him whom my soul loves. I sought Him—but I found Him not." Without Him altogether, he cannot be; for the promise is, "Lo, I am with you always." But there are times of sorrow, weakness, suffering, when He is not realized. And though the outcome of these experiences is to bring Him nearer, yet for a time He seems absent. The bond is not broken—but the joy is not tasted. The Church, too, has her nights of weariness and persecution in which He seems to stand aloof. It is dark—and He does not come.

(3.) Night with Jesus.

His presence is everything. It does not make it not night; but it makes the night seem like the day. With Him the darkness is as the light. For having Him we have,

- (1.) Companionship;
- (2.) Protection;
- (3.) Safety;
- (4.) Comfort;
- (5.) Strength;
- (6.) Assurance of coming day.

With these may we not rejoice in the night? It is the night which draws out these blessings; which makes Jesus more suitable, more necessary. Blessed night that introduces us more fully into the fellowship of Jesus.

V. DAY WITH JESUS.

Up till now it has been night; yet during it the Church has had the Master's presence; "Lo, I am with you always." It has been good for her, indeed, to have Him with her during the world's darkness. But He does not leave her when the day breaks. He does not say, Let me go, for the day breaks. More than ever shall He be with her during the long day of glory which is at hand. "So shall we ever be with the Lord!" He with us, and we with Him.

Lesson Nine

The Bread of Immortality

"But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die." – John 6:50

I. THE BREAD.

Bread is that which feeds the body; nourishes it, strengthens it, makes it grow. Without it, weakness comes, disease, and death. It is of bread for the soul that the Lord here speaks; of something that will *sustain* the life of the soul and *make* it grow. He announces Himself as that bread. Not some *truth* or *doctrine*—but Himself; the Word made flesh; very man and very God; His whole and complete person; not the manhood without the Godhead, nor the Godhead without the manhood; but His person, God man. He is *the* bread; not merely bread—but *the* bread; the *one true* bread; without whom the soul cannot grow, nor its life be sustained; for only by this life sustaining bread, can such sickly souls be nourished. As such (no less than as the sin-bearer), he is despised and rejected of men (our soul loathes this light food!) yet none the less is He necessary to the soul as its food—its bread.

Out of Him; apart from His person, there is no nourishment, no sustenance. He feeds; He alone; He feeds us on Himself. He alone is bread; He, the Christ of God; He, the eternal Word and Son; He, God manifest in flesh; He, in His glorious person, is our food; His flesh is food indeed. That which His person reveals to us of Godhead—of God, and the love of God; of God, and the wisdom, power, righteousness, majesty, and grace of God—is bread, the bread of the soul; the true bread and sustenance of creature hood; the hidden manna; better than angels' food; "the grain of heaven" (Psalm 78:24); the divine provision for the love and nourishment of humanity.

Our Lord applies various names to it:

- (1.) "bread from heaven";
- (2.) "true bread";

(3.) "the bread of God";

(4.) "bread of life";

(5.) "living bread."

All these are names indicative of its excellence, its power, its suitableness. It is the very bread we need; no other would do; only Immanuel's person; the Son of God Himself. This is the true unleavened bread; holy and incorruptible. The curse is not in it—but only the blessing. The Word made flesh, is the soul's eternal food.

II. THE COMING DOWN.

In one aspect this bread came "up" as well as "came down"; the human part coming up, the divine part coming down. But as it is the divine part that gives all its vitality and power of nourishment to it, so it is said, as a whole, to come down from heaven.

The word is such as to refer to past, present, and future.

(1.) It came down;

(2.) it is coming down;

(3.) it will continue to come down.

In the first promise, it came down; in all subsequent ones, it did the same. It especially came down when the Word was made flesh. That was the great descent of the divine bread; the like of which had not been in our world, nor can be in any other form. It was the bringing down of the granary and storehouse of heaven to earth. That storehouse is inexhaustible; ever accessible; its contents may be said to be either always open to us here on earth, or to be always coming down. In either aspect we see a perpetual supply; a never-failing fullness; ever-present bread; like the manna, ready for us each morning; in double amount each Sabbath; in seven-fold amount each communion. Let us open our mouth wide. There is bread enough and to spare—but we have no relish for it; we do not hunger for it. Hence our leanness; the poverty of our blood; the paleness of countenance; the feebleness of our limbs. We do not feed on it sufficiently. What different Christians we would be if we fully partook of it as God presents it. Eat, O

friends! Eat, and live! Eat, and be strong! Eat, and be in soul health! Eat, and go forth to do the work of God. You will not find the eternal bread on earth; the bread which feeds the immortal spirit. Only in Him who came down from heaven—the Christ of God.

III. THE EATING.

Faith eats, and fills the soul; unbelief refuses to eat, and so starves us. We eat *by*, and *in* believing. We take into our souls the words of the Holy Spirit concerning this bread; concerning Him who is the bread; and in doing so, we feed on it; we feed on Him. We receive His body, we take His flesh into our mouth, not in some carnal or mystical way—but in taking in the testimony, in studying and receiving the truth—the divine words are food: "Your words were found, and I did eat them"; but the special word which we eat, and by which we are nourished, is the word concerning Him who came down from heaven, the Christ of God, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. God invites us to eat.

IV. THE NOT DYING.

All food is for the production and sustaining of life. The tree of life indicated this. We are to eat so that we may live. Immortality is maintained by the provision which God has made for its upholding. This immortality corresponds to the food which produces and nourishes it. Ours is a divine immortality: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Christ's flesh is life to us. It quickens us. We eat it, and live forever. It is the bread without leaven; without anything in it which can weaken or corrupt; but everything fitted to produce immortality, and incorruptibility. The expression, "and not die," refers specially to the death of those who did eat the desert manna. That manna could not keep them from dying; but this hidden manna can. We may, however, connect the words here with those in Genesis, "In the day you eat thereof you shall surely die." To eat of that *tree of Paradise* was fatal. Death must follow. To eat of this better tree, this heavenly bread, is not fatal; is not mortal; no, it is life-giving. To eat it is not to die—but to live. There is no life—but in eating it. In the day you eat thereof, you shall not die—but live. *Eat and live* is our message to a dead world.

This is an invitation to all that this hungry, famished world contains. Israel only had the manna; to the world is offered this better bread. "Any one," is

God's message! "Whoever"; "everyone!" God places this bread in the world, and bids all eat of it. Empty, starving world, come and partake! "Bread enough and to spare" (Luke 15:17), is God's message. There is enough for all. It is free to every one. "My flesh I give for the life of the world." There is no restriction, no exclusion. Anyone!

Lesson Ten

Christ's Flesh—the World's Life

"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." – John 6:51

Of the Word, the eternal Word of God, it is said, "In Him was life" (John 1:4). It was as the Word, or Son, that He was the life. In Him, as the second Person of the Godhead, is the infinite fountainhead of life.

But between Him and us there is a great gulf. This divine well of life is inaccessible to us so long as "the Word" remains simply "the Word." For the communication of the life, He must be something more than the Word. The fountain is infinite; but it is unapproachable by us. We cannot climb to the heaven of heavens. A well must be dug on earth into which the heavenly waters may flow, so as to be within our reach. Earth cannot ascend to heaven; heaven must descend to earth, bringing with it all its riches of life.

"The Word was made flesh;" and as a result life was brought down to us. A man, with flesh and blood such as we have—was made the depository or storehouse of the life. As "the Word" he was the life; but only as "the Word made flesh" is He our life. As the Son of God he is "light;" but only as the God-man is he the "light of the world," the "light of men." It is as the Word made flesh that He speaks when He says, *"This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world;"* and again, when He says, "My flesh is food indeed—except you eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man, you have no life in you."

But food of itself does not produce or commence life; it only sustains and nourishes it. Dead men cannot eat; the dead body digests no food, however excellent. But He who is the Word made flesh actively quickens, as well as passively feeds. As the Creator of the universe, He speaks and it is done; He creates all things new. From himself goes forth directly the quickening power by which souls are raised from the dead. And having been made alive from the dead, they begin to feed on Him—and find in this food their daily life, and strength, and growth.

Therefore He is "the life of the world." It is as "the world's life" that we have fellowship with Him. It is as "the world's life" that faith recognizes Him and rejoices in Him. "Christ our life!" This is our watchword and experience. To say that Christ is our life is not only to say there is life in Christ for me—but that life is flowing down for me and into me. It is just such life as we need in all respects, recovering and refreshing the soul; not only rescuing it from the death of condemnation—but acting with resurrection-power in restoring it to right spiritual feeling and action. It is life which, when it comes in, fills up the void within as well as comes down like rain upon the mown grass, and like showers that water the earth. It is life most full and ample; it is life abiding and unbroken; it is life undeserved and unpurchased; it is life which no power of death nor influence of disease can affect or impair.

I. OUR CONNECTION WITH CHRIST BRINGS LIFE INTO US.

Cut the wires of the telephone and computer, knock down the cell towers, and dig up the cable lines, and all communication ceases. Restore them, and the communion is resumed; the current flows again. So, it is connection with Christ our life that vitalizes, quickens us spiritually. He is in heaven, and we are upon the earth; but the greatness of distance does not matter, provided there be connection, the connection, as it were, of a single wire. That single wire is faith. This is the one connecting medium. Not love, nor holiness, nor goodness, nor earnestness—but faith, simple faith. Our belief of the divine testimony concerning Christ is the one thing that links us to Him. Other things follow on this; but they are not the connecting wire. Faith, as the only grace which admits of being thoroughly insulated and separated from earthly things—is the true and only conducting wire. Unbelief is the great non-conducting medium which arrests, in a moment, all communication between heaven and earth. Faith only restores this—establishing the surest and most blessed of all connections between Christ and the soul, between heaven and earth.

II. OUR CONNECTION WITH CHRIST CONTINUES THE LIFE.

The life is not like a treasure of gold brought to us, and deposited with us, to serve us for a lifetime. It is not like a lake or cistern of water formed within us, rendering us independent of all without us. It is something laid up for us in heaven, and transmitted down to earth, hour by hour, as light is deposited in the sun, and at each successive moment emitted from him to us. The connection between us and Christ must be kept up unbroken, else

the life in us will fail. It is not said, he who "*has* believed," but he "that *believes*," has everlasting life. There is a well near Jerusalem, called by the Jews *the well of Nehemiah*, which is chiefly fed by the rain. When the showers fall abundantly, and the Kedron flows like a river, this well is filled and the city rejoices. But this is only once or twice in the year. But there is a deep well underneath the temple, which is fed by water from the great pools of Solomon, near Bethlehem. This is always full, being fed from a perennial spring whose waters do not fail. Only when the aqueduct is broken which leads the water along, mile after mile, into Jerusalem, can this temple-cistern fail. Such is to be the manner of our life. It is not like the inconstant well fed by an intermitting stream; but like the great temple cistern, ever full, because it is fed from a never failing spring. Faith is the aqueduct which brings the water from the pools of our true Solomon into us—his spiritual temples. Every moment this divine aqueduct should be discharging the waters of life into our souls from the unfailing fountain above. By day and night, in calm or storm, through gardens or barren hillsides—that stream flows on, and shall flow on forever! Time has broken Solomon's aqueduct and interrupted the communication between the fountain and the temple-cistern; but no time can break the connection between us and the heavenly fountain; for who shall separate us from the love of Christ? "Because I live, you shall live also." Accordingly the soul is always kept full and fresh.

III. OUR CONNECTION WITH CHRIST INTRODUCES US INTO THE EVERLASTING LIFE TO COME.

For the present is but the pledge of the coming life. It is into a glorious flower, which the present bud expands; and its future expansion is owed to that same connection which quickened it and nourished it here. For faith is the substance of things hoped for; and it is into these "things hoped for" that faith introduces us at last. The fullness of the life is yet to come. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory." And it is for eternal life and glory that our present course of faith on earth is the preparation. "It does not yet appear what we shall be"; but we know that the future life of vision, into which the present life of faith is leading us, will be as unutterably blessed and glorious as it is abiding and everlasting.

Such is the beginning, the middle, and the end, or at least the consummation, of this life. And this threefold blessing is linked with the one

thing—faith. Our belief of the divine testimony concerning Christ, our life, is the one connecting link or line between the past, the present, and the future of our better life. He who *believes* has Christ for his life—now, and for evermore. He who has the Son has the *life*; and he who has the life, the *adoption*; and he who has the adoption, has the *kingdom* and the glory.

This connection with the living One, with Christ our life, works in many ways. Having been brought to the life, or rather the life having been brought into us, everything about us partakes of this life. As every part of the flower or tree gets the sap, so every part of our being gets this life out of the divine fullness of life deposited in the living One. Our *religion* becomes a living religion; our *prayers* living prayers; our *praises* living praises; our *service* living service; our *words* living words; our *labor* living labor—our whole being is now pervaded with life, spiritual life, divine life. How different everything is now to us! For it is life which looses our bondage and brings in the liberty. It is life that casts out the darkness and fills us with light. It is life that gives us eyes to see, and ears to hear, and feet to run in the heavenly way. The coming in of Christ, our life, is the new creation of the man! And what is there that that new creation will not work within us!

This life is that of the Word made flesh. It is a new and divine life; for we are "made partakers of the divine nature"; we are "made partakers of Christ." And it is as if the same blood that flowed through his veins, flowed through ours. It is not a restoration to us of the first Adam's life; it is the impartation of a far higher life from the second Adam; for the first Adam was made a living soul—but the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

Nor is it simply the flesh or body of Christ that is our life—but that flesh or body broken. It is not merely an incarnate Christ—but an incarnate Christ crucified! That flesh of the Son of man, in order to be the food of our souls, must be bruised! And that in which we find our food and life is the broken body and shed blood of the Lord. On this flesh and blood we feed when we receive the Father's witness concerning it, and dwell upon the truths which that testimony contains. Thus Christ's flesh is food indeed, and his blood is drink indeed.

Consider this life under the following aspects and bearing:

(1.) It is life from the dead.

Like Lazarus, we are dead and buried. The living voice of the Word made flesh speaks to us and says, *Come forth*. We hear it and obey. We arise from the dead at the call of Him who is the resurrection and the life. This is conversion. This is the new birth; a resurrection from the dead.

(2.) It is life in the midst of death.

From the day of conversion the life is like a spark in the midst of a stormy sea, or like our body exposed to the polar frost. Everything is against its continuance; and, were it not divine, it could not remain. But it is divine; and maintains its vigor in the midst of a world of death.

(3.) It is life in death.

On a deathbed the life shines out in its brightness; and when death seizes us, this life remains untouched. Over it the last enemy has no power. Nor can the grave extinguish it. It is life which survives mortality and corruption; life which defies the tomb; life which he, who has the power of death, cannot reach.

(4.) It is resurrection life.

For a while it becomes invisible, while soul and body are parted. But it soon rekindles, or rather re-appears, like a returning star, as soon as soul and body are re-united. It never indeed leaves the soul, even when the body crumbles down. But it remains unseen by us until the resurrection-day. Then it rises like a sun—a sun to shine forever! When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory.

Take these LESSONS:

- (1.) Do not despise this life. Some have slighted it for too long.
- (2.) Receive it now. For this we make known the divine testimony; for it is with our reception of it that the life is connected.
- (3.) Cherish it forevermore. Let it reign within you, triumphing over death; and making you feel, and act, and speak as living men!

(4.) Anticipate the resurrection day. Then we shall know that life in a way such as we have never known it here. It will be infinitely fuller, more blessed, and more glorious!

Lesson Eleven

Come and Drink

"On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink." – John 7:37.

I. THE TIME.

The last and great day of the feast of tabernacles; when Israel's joy was fullest; at least in appearance and expression; just when men would have thought there was least need of any other joy; and no propriety in diverting their minds from the scene before them; when many days of religious service would have seemed quite enough to fill them. Just then the voice is heard and the message strikes on their ear, *"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."*

II. THE PLACE.

Jerusalem—the temple. What need of anything else than what that temple provided? Was not David's experience still true, "How lovely are your tabernacles"; "I was glad when they said to me." Besides, the temple was now filled with crowds; and a scene was taking place in its courts of striking aspect. The Levite was now bringing in the water from Siloam in the golden pitcher, or pouring it on the sacrifice; and Israel was about to burst forth in one loud shout of joy. Imposing scene and place!

III. THE GIVER.

It is the Son of God who stands up in the midst of these ten thousands; with something in his hand for them; something which he counts worthy of their acceptance. The giver is divine and heavenly; not merely a prophet or teacher sent from God—but the Son of God himself; who knew what they needed, and what He had to give; who saw into their hearts; had sounded their depths of emptiness; had measured the intensity of their thirst. He is himself God's gift; yet He is also giver; the dispenser of a fullness which is absolutely infinite. To himself he turns their eye—here as always elsewhere. "Come to me." They were dealing with other things or people; he bids them deal with himself. Feasts, altars, sacrifices, doctrines, ceremonies, were all in vain; they must deal with himself.

IV. THE GIFT.

Living water; something with which to quench their thirst; the Holy Spirit. Here is a gift in Christ's hands for them; a divine gift from a divine giver; a gift sufficient to fill the soul of the emptiest, to quench the thirst of the thirstiest; a gift not only great enough to fill them—but to overflow upon others; a gift personal, infinite, free. There are two gifts of God which stand above and alone in their priceless greatness—the gift of his Son, the gift of his Spirit; both of these presented to man, pressed upon him "If you knew the gift of God, you would have asked and he would have given you living water."

V. THE PEOPLE.

Who are they who need this living water? Not heathens; not profane and irreligious; but Jews; religious Jews; engaged in the worship of God, at one of their most joyful feasts. This is remarkable. In the fourth chapter it is to the Samaritan that he presents the cup of living water. In the book of Revelation, it is offered indiscriminately to all, Jew and Gentile. So also in the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah. But here it is to the Jew, the religious Jew. He is the thirsty one, he needs living water. His rites, and feasts, and sacrifices cannot fill him, nor quench his thirst. He still has a deep void within—an intense thirst, which calls for something more spiritual and divine. It is not then to the idolatrous pagan that the Lord speaks; not merely to the lover of pleasure or lust; the heedless sinner. It is to the men who frequent the sanctuary—who pray and praise outwardly; who go to the Lord's table. It is to them He speaks. Perhaps the thirstiest of our race are to be found among our so-called religious men—and I do not mean the hypocrite or Pharisee—but those who, with devout conscientiousness, attend to what are called religious duties in all their parts. They go through the whole round and routine of service—but they are not happy. They are still thirsty and weary. This external religiousness helps to pacify conscience—but it does not make them happy. Sunday comes after Sunday, and finds them in their place in the sanctuary—but they are not happy. It is a form or a performance; an empty vessel. They are just where they were. There are multitudes of such in our day; in our churches; at our communion tables, to them Jesus speaks, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink." Duties, ceremonies, and performances cannot make you happy. They are a weariness. They leave you often more thirsty

than before. But deal with Jesus, as God's gift, as the dispenser of God's gift—you will find in Him the fountain of living water.

VI. THE LOVE.

It is all love, from first to last. In love Jesus stands up and speaks. In love He presents the full vessel of living water, and presses it to their parched lips. Here is the love which passes knowledge; love yearning over unhappy man, and pitying his unhappiness. Come to the waters! Come, and quench your thirst. Come, and be full! Come, and be happy for evermore!

Lesson Twelve

Jesus Our Light

Then each went to his own home. – John 7:53

But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives... When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." – John 8:1, 12

If we group together the scenes of this and the succeeding chapter, we might head them accordingly—a **day** with Jesus; in which we have not merely his answers to the disputing Jews—but his proclamation of love; a **night** with Jesus on the Mount of Olives; **dawn** with Jesus in the temple, listening to his early teaching; **sunrise** with Jesus, as, pointing to the east, He says, *I am the light of the world.*

Let us follow another division, which will, perhaps, bring out the truths of the passage more fully, in connection both with man and the Lord;

I. MAN AT HOME—JESUS NOT AT HOME.

"Then each went to his own home." "But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives." The crowd which had surrounded Him all the day gradually drops off, one by one, as the evening draws on, and Jesus is left alone. Each one has a home to go to, a roof to shelter him, and retires to rest with his family—Jesus has nowhere to lay his head. They go one way—He goes another. They keep within the city walls—He goes outside the gate to Olivet, there to spend the night in prayer. He is not at home; even in the temple, which is his Father's house, He must not stay; its gates are closing, and He is shut out; the temple shuts Him out, the city shuts Him out. He can only go to the places where man is not; to the solitudes where, outside of Jerusalem, outside even of Bethany, He can meet with God. This homelessness of the Son of God was for us. He became homeless that we might have a home—a home in his Father's house. He went outside the gate that we might enter in. He became an exile, taking our place and life of banishment, that we might have an entrance ministered to us into the celestial city, the Paradise of God. Have you, O man, availed yourself of this great work, and returned to your Father's house? Or are you still an exile from God, though at home on earth?

II. MAN THE LISTENER—JESUS THE TEACHER.

That to which God calls us is "listening." "Hear, and your soul shall live;" "faith comes by hearing." Christ came to us as the Word—to speak to us; his very coming was God saying to us, "Now listen to me." Seldom do we find man in this attitude, and therefore so little faith; and, when Christ comes the second time, He will find little faith, because few will be listening. But here we have a group of listeners, and that in the early dawn, gathered round the eternal Word. And He teaches! How willing to teach! How glad to get a listener, an open ear! How eager is He to pour in all his wisdom; to teach the ignorant; to remove from their minds the evil and error; to teach them the good and the true! Are our ears ever open? Are we eager listeners? As ready to hear as He is to speak? Oh how much we lose of happy wisdom, simply from not listening! Jesus Himself knew what it was to hear the Father, "He awakens morning by morning; He awakens mine ear to hear as one who is taught." And having learned, He comes to teach. *Learn of me*, He says. The Lord make us willing learners! The Lord give us open ears!

III. MAN THE SINNER—CHRIST THE FORGIVER.

In the midst of the teaching and the listening, a scene occurs; an interruption, yet not truly so; an interruption which only illustrates the character of the teacher. Vile sin has just been discovered, and the culprit is brought in. It is flagrant transgression. How will He deal with it? Will He excuse it, or will He say, *Go and stone her!* If He does the former, what becomes of his holiness and professed veneration for the law? If the latter, what becomes of his kindness to publicans and sinners. He does neither. And yet He pardons the guilty! How marvelous the grace! How wonderfully He deals with sin and the sinner! He condemns—no, He makes his hearers condemn it—and not only the woman's—but their own; yet He forgives! He shows them sin in a worse, a wider, a more universal aspect than they dreamed of; yet He also shows that nothing can obstruct his forgiving love. His is pardon to the uttermost. He came to save sinners! Who is there that He is not willing and able to save?

IV. MAN THE CHILD OF DARKNESS—CHRIST THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

These are solemn words, "children of night," children of *darkness*. The world is dark—darkness itself. Each soul is dark. Man's efforts to enlighten himself has only left him darker. But the light has come; the true light now shines. The Christ has come, and He is the light of the world, the light of the soul, the light of life. In the present case He is pointing to the rising sun and saying, "I (not the sun) am the light of the world." Until I appear all is night. Then, all is day. Christ as the revealer of the Father, of his grace and righteousness—Christ as the possessor and dispenser of the Holy Spirit—is the light of the world.

(1.) Light cheers and gladdens.

Thus Jesus gives joy and peace.

(2.) Light purifies.

Jesus renews, sanctifies, assimilates.

(3.) Light quickens.

Jesus removes death; imparts life.

(4.) Light heals.

Jesus heals wounds, diseases; He cures.

(5.) Light liberates.

Jesus sets us free. No bondage where Jesus is.

Oh the difference between night and noon, darkness and sunshine! Have you made the exchange? Will you make it now? He who believes in me shall not abide in darkness.

Lesson Thirteen

Truth and Liberty

To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." – John 8:31-32

"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"; accordingly we read in verse thirty, "Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him." So He taught, and so they believed; as the apostle puts it "So we preached, and so you believed." It is always in connection with the word of truth that the Holy Spirit works in us. Christ's voice and the Spirit's hand go together. We find this in our text; but we find more than this.

I. DISCIPLESHIP BEGINS WITH RECEPTION OF CHRIST'S WORD.

There may be many an anxious thought before this; many a tear; many a bitter groan. There may be alarm, and disquietude, and inquiry. But these are not discipleship. All the world is, in its poor, dark way, stretching out its hands after something which can only be realized in Christ. But this is not discipleship. All men are saying, Who will show us any good; but this is not discipleship. That begins with receiving His word; not with doing some great thing; but with receiving His word; receiving it as the scholar receives the master's teaching. He is the Word; and He speaks the word. What is this word which He speaks? It is a word (1.) concerning the Father; (2.) concerning Himself. He comes as the revealer of the Father, and as the declarer of Himself and His work. From the moment that we receive what He tells us concerning the Father and Himself, we become His disciples, His scholars. Consequently we are taught, not of man—but of God. This is the true, the authentic beginning of discipleship.

II. THE TEST OF TRUE DISCIPLESHIP IS CONTINUANCE IN THAT WORD.

Our Lord evidently lays great stress on this point, continuance in His word. It is not continuance in general adherence to His cause—but continuance in His word—in that word, by the reception of which we became disciples. As it is by holding the beginning of our confidence that we are made

partakers of Christ, so it is by continuing in the word, that we make good the genuineness of our discipleship. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," says Paul; and it is this word that contains everything we need.

(1.) It is an expansive word;

Ever widening its dimensions; growing upon us; never old, ever new; in which we make continual discoveries; the same tree—but ever putting forth new branches and leaves; the same river—but ever swelling and widening; losing none of its old water, yet ever receiving more.

(2.) It is a quickening word;

Maintaining old life, yet producing new; "Your word has quickened me."

(3.) It is a strengthening word;

Nerving us and invigorating us; lifting us up when bowed down; imparting health, and courage, and resolution, and persistency.

(4.) It is a sanctifying word.

It purifies; it detects the evil, and purges it away; it pours in holiness into the soul. It works a blessed work within. Let us continue in it; not weary of it; not losing delight in it; but abiding in it.

III. THE RESULT OF DISCIPLESHIP IS KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH.

We have seen the properties and virtues of the word in itself; mark the impartation of these to the disciple. All who enter this school, and who put themselves under the teaching of this instructor are taught of God; as it is written, "They shall be all taught of God." He shall know the truth; not a truth, nor part of it—but the truth, the whole of it—the truth, and not error—Him who is the truth. He shall be wise; wise in Christ; in Him who is our wisdom. He shall know it; not guess at it, nor speculate on it; nor get a glimpse of it; but know it; realize it; make choice of it; appreciate it. The truth is Christ himself; the teacher of the truth is Christ; He is both teacher and lesson. The knowledge of Christ is the knowledge of the truth; ever

growing, both in extent and in depth. Christ's promise to the disciple is, "You shall know the truth." Blessed promise in a day of doubt and error.

IV. THE TRUTH IS LIBERTY.

All truth is, so far, liberty; and all error bondage; some truth is greater liberty, and some error greater bondage. Blessed are these words of the Master: "The truth shall make you free." Bondage, with many, is simply associated with tyranny, bad government—civil or ecclesiastical despotism. Christ's words go far deeper. They go to the root of the evil. The real chains, the real prison, the real bondage—are within, not without; so the true liberty is within, not without. It springs from what a man knows of God and of his Christ. Seldom do men realize this. Error, bondage! How can that be, they say, if the error be the man's own voluntary doing; if it be the result of his own intellectual effort; if it do not be connected with prison-walls or the oppression of power? But the master is very explicit. The truth shall make you free! There is no other freedom, worthy of the name, of which this is not the root. "He is the freeman whom the truth makes free—and all others are slaves."

Be free, says the Son of God to the Sons of men! How? By becoming my disciples; knowing the truth which I shall teach; and following me, If the Son make you free—you shall be free indeed!

Lesson Fourteen

The Father Glorifying (Honoring) the Son

Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me." – John 8:54

To glorify is to do or to speak of a person, in such a way that which not only shows him our own esteem—but will also cause others to see that, and make them esteem him likewise. God honored **Abel** by openly accepting his sacrifice, and showing him to be the man of his love and favor. He honored **Enoch** by translating him; **Noah**, by singling him out to be the saved one of his generation; **Abraham**, by appearing to him as the God of glory, and calling him out of Ur of the Chaldees; **Joseph**, by bringing him out of the pit of Dothan and the prison of Pharaoh to the second rank in Egypt; **Moses**, by drawing him out of the Nile, and making him king in Jeshurun; **David**, by calling him from the sheepfolds of Bethlehem to the throne of Israel; **Solomon**, by giving him wisdom, and power, and riches, and a peaceful kingdom, and making him so pre-eminently the type of Messiah and his glorious kingdom.

Such is honor and glory, and such is the way in which we see it conferred. By what God said and did to these individuals, He not only manifested his sovereign choice—but his love for them, his appreciation of their character, his sense of their fitness for the honor conferred.

All this is specially seen in the Father's dealings with his Son. We see his love and admiration for him, as well as his desire to make him the loved and admired of others. We see his delight in him, and his purpose to make him the delight of all in earth and heaven. We see his sense of his infinite excellency, and beauty, and perfection; his fitness for, and worthiness of the honor bestowed already on him since the day that he ascended on high, and to be yet more abundantly conferred on him at his second coming, when he comes to be glorified in his saints, and admired of all those who believe. Let us consider—

I. THE BESTOWER OF THE HONOR.

It is the Father. The value of the honor depends greatly on him who bestows it. *Honor bestowed for a price, or by self or by unworthy hands, or by one incapable of judging—is worthless.* Flatterers have honored kings, as Tertullus did Felix—but that was no honor at all. Napoleon put the crown upon his own head—but that was no honor. The Father, however, knows what He is bestowing, and on whom He is conferring the gift. He is fit judge both of the person and the honor. We may then be well assured that the honor received by Christ is well bestowed. The Father loves the Son; and this assures us that He is worthy of the love; He honors the Son, and this assures us that He is worthy of the honor.

II. THE RECIPIENT OF THE HONOR.

It is the Son, the Christ. It is He whom the king delights to honor. He is one whom the Father knows well; and has been acquainted with from all eternity. He is God—true God. He is man—true man. He is God-man, the person in whom the two natures meet, and therefore altogether unique, a new thing on earth, and a new thing in heaven; one in whom all created and all uncreated perfection meets; one in whom all that is glorious in the universe centers; one in whom all that is excellent, both in heaven and earth, is displayed. He is the most marvelous revelation and incarnation of divine wisdom that can be found throughout the universe. He is the infinitely perfect handiwork of the infinitely perfect Yahweh; the only thing brought forth in time and into whose composition creaturehood enters, in which there can be found no flaw, and of which we can say there is not the possibility of fall or failure in all the eternal future.

III. THE NATURE OF THE HONOR BESTOWED.

As in the constitution of his person we have something peculiar, so in the honor bestowed we have something corresponding to this. It is divine honor; but it is more. It is not only all the honor which the Father receives and which the Spirit receives—but it is something in addition, something which they cannot receive, something arising out of the Christ's humanity; and humanity in connection with divinity. What this is we may not understand—but we know that it must be so. Again, it is human honor, honor in connection with his perfect manhood; for He is the only true specimen of perfect manhood, and as such is entitled to all the honor which God intended for our race. No more, He is entitled to honor such as Adam could not receive—the honor arising to his manhood from its connection

with the Godhead; honor, therefore, of a far higher kind than could possibly be given to any creature not connected with Godhead, yet, still human honor. There is in this way a peculiar honor created, and a peculiar vessel prepared for receiving it; honor such as could not have been received by any other being in the universe, except the Christ of God, the Incarnate Son. From this, too, there springs, peculiar honor to the Father from this God-man—honor at once divine and human; honor such as no one in heaven or earth can give but he. No one can honor the Father as the Christ of God can.

IV. THE TIMES AND WAYS IN WHICH THE HONOR IS BESTOWED.

At his birth, baptism, transfiguration, resurrection, ascension, still more at his second coming. Every day the Father honored Him when here. Dishonored by man, He was honored by God. At present, in heaven, He receives glory and honor. Hereafter, in his kingdom, the full honor is to be bestowed. When He comes again, He comes to be glorified. Thus the Father declares his worthiness, and shows his admiration and love of the Son; his purpose to fill heaven and earth with it, to spread it over all time and all eternity.

V. THE RESULTS.

The bearings of this honor on the whole universe are immeasurable and inconceivable. This honor is at once the pledge and the measure of the blessing which the universe receives, and shall receive forever. These results are such as the following—

(1.) To the FATHER.

It is through the honor conferred on the Son that the Father is more fully unveiled and manifested, as well as more abundantly glorified. The honor bestowed on the Son comes back to the Father; for all that the Son receives, and all that He does, is to the glory of God the Father.

(2.) To the HOLY SPIRIT.

The Spirit's office is to glorify Christ; it is through Him that the honor comes to the Son. By means of this shall the Spirit be made fully

known and glorified; His Godhead declared and illustrated; His wisdom and power displayed.

(3.) To the whole GODHEAD.

The three-one Yahweh is glorified through means of the honor bestowed upon the second Person, the Incarnate Word. Each Person is more fully manifested and more abundantly glorified; the Father, Son, and Spirit receives new and everlasting honor.

(4.) To the CHURCH.

Christ's honor is hers; for all that He has is hers. She is made partaker of Christ, joint-heir with Him. The Bridegroom's glory is not for himself alone. His bride shares it with him. She shares His riches, His inheritance, His kingdom, and His crown. This she does by faith even now; she will do so in reality when He returns as King of kings, to place her beside himself upon His throne.

(5.) To HEAVEN.

The greatness of the King's honor adds to the glory of his palace, his metropolis, lighting up the great bridal-hall with new splendor, and irradiating with new brightness, the heavenly Jerusalem, whose brightness is already beyond that of the sun. Infinite is the addition of glory to the heaven of heavens, from the glory of Him who is its King.

(6.) To ANGELS.

He is their head, as well as the churches — though not so closely knit to them, as to us. Principalities and powers are his hosts, his servants, his royal retinue, and in his honor they are honored. Each angel shines more brightly from the glory put upon the Incarnate Son.

(7.) To EARTH.

At present we do not see any change. The curse is still here. Creation still groans. Shame is over all. But the curse is to pass away. Creation is to be delivered. Earth is to be clothed upon with a new and immortal robe; made more fair than Paradise. All this through the honor put upon the Son. For earth is specially His country, His

home—the birthplace of the Man Christ Jesus. His body is composed of the dust; and here he found not only his cradle—but his grave. Above all other places, it has a claim to share his glory.

(8.) To the UNIVERSE.

The whole wide stretch of infinite space shall be irradiated with this glory. Every planet, every star, every fragment of creation, far and near, shall receive fresh luster from this new-lighted sun.

Let us honor Him now. He will be honored from this time forward. We are sure of that. Such is the Father's purpose. But let us honor Him now, when He is getting no honor from men. Let us honor Him here where he gets only dishonor. In the great day for which we are waiting, the day of His second coming, he will be abundantly glorified. But let us who know him glorify him in this day and age of evil and unbelief.

Sinner, honor Christ! Honor him by coming to him and getting salvation at his hands. The honor which the Father puts on Him as Savior, is the security for a present pardon to you. Your pardon is Christ's honor. God glorifies Him in receiving and blessing you. Kiss the Son!

Lesson Fifteen

The Honor Given To Faith

*"Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you **believed**, you would see the glory of God?" – John 11:40*

That which alone is worth the seeing; that which fills and gladdens the soul, when seen and known; that, without which we must remain unsatisfied and unblessed forever; that, in comparison with which all other sights are as nothing—is "the glory of God."

That which righteous men of old desired to see—but saw only in glimpses and at intervals; that, for the seeing of which Moses prayed, saying, "Show me, I beseech you, your glory"; that to which the eye of every creature should turn, in longing earnestness—is "the glory of God."

That which everything in heaven and earth is intended to reveal, for the "heavens declare the glory of God," and the earth everywhere shows it forth; that, for the beholding of which our eyes were made, and for the appreciation of which our minds were formed; that, for the unfolding of which sin came in, and is yet to be expelled by holiness, and death came in that it may yet be succeeded by more blessed life; that, for the revelation of which the Son of God took flesh, and died, and was buried, and rose again—was "the glory of God."

It is not God Himself that Christ here speaks of our seeing, though in another place He says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." It is his "glory," or the revelation of that which is in Him—some visible display of the invisible excellencies that are in Him. In one sense we "shall see God"; in another, we cannot see Him; for no man has seen nor can see Him; only the Son of God, who is inseparable from the Father, can see and declare Him. But without noticing this point farther, we observe that it is His "glory" that is spoken of here as that which we are to see.

The glory of God is that which shows Him to be the glorious being that He is; and it is through the knowledge of His glory that we reach the knowledge of Himself. This glory is spread out before us in all His works; it is written out at length for us to read in the Scriptures of His truth; and it is centered

and embodied in his incarnate Son, who is the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person.

But the one special point of which our Lord here speaks, is His glory as the bringer of life out of death. It was this that the Son of God came so fully to reveal, and did reveal, both in His own person, as the dying and rising One, and in the works of his hands. Elsewhere He speaks of this glory being manifested in his opening the eyes of the blind, and so bringing light out of darkness; here He speaks of showing it in the raising of Lazarus from the dead, and so bringing life out of death and the grave.

That this was a indication of divine glory is evident from the greatness of the thing itself, and from the stress which the Bible lays on resurrection and the power needed to accomplish it. To remove the penalty of death; to undo the work which death had done; to conquer him that had the power of death; to swallow up death in victory—these are things in the accomplishment of which man could have no share. They are altogether the doing of God; and their accomplishment is the special manifestation of his glory.

Resurrection, then, is that which Christ has taught us to regard as one of the most signal revelations of the glory of God. How it is so, I do not now ask; I take the statement of Scripture as to the fact itself. And if in the resurrection of one that glory was to be so conspicuously seen, how much more so in the resurrection of the millions of the saints in the day of the Lord. The glory that God is to get from the resurrection of his saints, is, next to that from the resurrection of his Son, the greatest that He shall receive. Whatever we may have seen or known of this glory before that, will be as nothing when compared with the abundance and the brightness of the glory to be manifested then.

That which had blotted the work of God, which had marred that which God pronounced good, which had seemed to bring discredit upon God, and to call in question his power, his wisdom, his foresight, his goodness—was death. It seemed to have come in spite of God, and to possess the power of undoing all that God had done; it seemed to intimate the existence of a being stronger than God, and capable of throwing down all that God might build up; it seemed to track the footsteps of the Creator, so that wherever He went to create, it followed to destroy. From this, what glory could accrue to God? Did not death seem to mock Omnipotence, and bring his

excellency to shame? It did; and hence the stress that is laid upon the undoing of death and the emptying of the grave. Hence the glory that is said to be brought to God by resurrection; and hence the name which Christ takes to himself, "the Resurrection and the Life," and the work which he is specially said to have accomplished, that is, to have brought "life and immortality to light." It is in life, not in death, that the glory of God is seen; and it is to Him especially as the bringer of life out of death, who we are to look, in order to behold his glory.

Let us look more minutely at the words of the Lord before us.

I. GOD'S PURPOSE IS TO REVEAL HIS GLORY.

To show his glory, is his design in creation; still more so in his work of resurrection and redemption. Man may hide himself, because he possesses nothing of his own at all; but God cannot do so; that which is in Him must of necessity come forth, seeing all his fullness is his own, borrowed from none, either in heaven or earth. For his own sake, and for the creature's sake, He must show himself. Not to do so would be to wrong both Himself and the creature. Were the sun to withdraw its shining, how grievous the loss to us; yet not half so terrible as if God were to refuse to reveal himself. It is God's purpose to show himself, to manifest his glory, that he may rejoice in the honor flowing to him from all that He does, and that the creature may be gladdened, and comforted, and blessed in beholding the glory thus presented by God for him to gaze upon.

II. CHRIST'S DESIRE IS THAT WE SHOULD SEE THE GLORY OF GOD.

He is the revealer of the Father, and as such He came to earth. Sin had hidden the Father from our world, as the dark, thick cloud blots out the face of the sun. Christ came to unveil the Father's face, to make known the Father's character, to manifest the Father's glory, to roll off the clouds that covered the face of the Sun. This was his errand; and his desire is to speed in his errand, and to show us the glory that He came to reveal. Love to the Father makes Him desirous of this, for He desires the Father's glory; love to us makes Him desirous of this, for He seeks our blessedness, and He knows that the creature's blessedness is in beholding the glory of God. O man! What are you without this glory? A world without a flower, or tree, or blade of grass; a sky without a sun or star. Will you not behold it? The Son of God longs to show it to you. For this end He came into the world, and

died and rose again. Will you not turn your eyes to this blessed object, that in beholding it, your soul may be filled with heavenly light and gladness? To say that Christ desires your salvation, and your holiness, and your comfort, is indeed to say much; but to say that He desires your beholding of the glory of God, is to say more than all this; for it is to tell you that He longs to show you that which, as soon as beheld, would bring life, and gladness, and consolation, and holiness to your soul. When He says, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest," He is saying, "Come unto me, and I will show you that which will at once give you rest." When He says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink," He is saying, "Let him come unto me, and I will show him that, the sight of which will be more refreshing to him than all the waters of earth."

III. IT IS UNBELIEF WHICH HINDERS OUR SEEING THIS GLORY.

The thing the Lord complained of the most, not only among the people—but among his disciples—was unbelief. They were slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken; they put away from them the good news of God's free love in visiting them from on high; and they shut both eyes and ears against the wonders done and spoken by the Son of God in the very midst of them. Had their unbelief shown itself in putting away from them the evil day, and rejecting the message of judgment, it would not have been so marvelous or unaccountable. But it showed itself in refusing the tidings of good; in rejecting the grace granted so abundantly; and in discrediting the signs and wonders displayed so blessedly by Christ before them—signs and wonders in which God was revealing himself to them, and unfolding the marvels of his glory.

It was this UNBELIEF that obstructed their vision of the glory; and it is this same unbelief that does the same evil work to us today.

(1.) Unbelief hinders Christ from working those works which show the glory.

This seems like a strange thing to say, and one which we would not have ventured to say if it had not been written down for us by inspired men. That a child's hand held up against the sun should hinder it from shining; that a withered leaf thrown into a stream should stop its flowing or dry up its source; that the breath of man, blown up against the sky, should quench the light of its myriad stars—these things

would not really be so marvelous as that man's unbelief should prevent God's power from being sent forth, and the Son of God from doing those things which would reveal the glory of the Father. Yet we find this strange truth recorded. The evangelist Matthew thus writes—"He did not do many miracles there because of their unbelief" (13:58); and Mark uses still stronger language—"He was not able to do any miracles there, except that He laid His hands on a few sick people and healed them. And He was amazed at their unbelief." (6:5, 6).

The sad and all but incredible truth is explicitly declared, that the sinner's unbelief really does hinder Christ from working. His hand is not kept from working by our unworthiness, or by the multitude of our sins—but simply by our unbelief. It was unbelief which arrested Christ's miracles in Galilee; it was unbelief which almost hindered the raising of Lazarus from the dead. It was unbelief which Christ referred to, when He said to the father of the demoniac, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believes;" and it was on the acknowledgment of this that the man so eagerly replied, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief" (Mark 9:23, 24). Yes, it is unbelief which lays its hand on Christ's hand, and says, *Work not*. It is unbelief which thrusts away both the power and the grace of God.

(2.) Unbelief hinders us from perceiving the glory that is in the works, even when they are produced.

Christ's hand was not always held back by man's rejection of his love and power. It did work the works of God before human eyes; works in which the glory of God shone most brightly. Men saw the works—but they did not see the glory. They saw the healing of the leper—but they did not see the glory of God revealed in it. They saw the opening of the eyes of the blind, the unstopping of the ears of the deaf, the giving of the ability to walk to the lame, the casting out of demons; but they did not see the glory of God in these—even as they saw neither God Himself, nor his glory in Him who did these works. In the case of the feeding of the multitude, they saw the miracle, they partook of the food, yet they did not see God in this at all; no, they followed Jesus for a while because of the wondrous supply of food administered by Him—but they perceived nothing glorious or divine in it. "You seek me, not because you saw the miracles—but because you ate the loaves and were filled" (John 6:26).

The glory wrapped up in these miracles could only come forth from faith. To unbelief they appeared common things, or, at the most, only striking facts in which there was little meaning. It was faith which pierced beyond the shell; it was faith which drew aside the veil; it was faith which saw God in all of these, and drank of the living waters of his grace, of which each of these miracles was the blessed well.

(3.) Unbelief hinders us from enjoying the glory—even after we have in some measure seen it.

Christ's disciples saw the glory shown forth in his miracles; yet, after all, they did not realize it on the level they should. It seemed to come to them in glimpses and at intervals, not continuously. Like men with a telescope at their side, and sometimes looking through it, and sometimes closing it up; so these disciples never entered into the glory which they acknowledged at the level they could have. Faith was not always in view. There was more of unbelief than of faith in their history. They had faith enough to show them something; but their unbelief hid more than their faith revealed. And it is even more so with us—than it was with them. For the full glory has been manifested now in the dying and rising of Him who is the brightness of Yahweh's glory. Our eye rests on it, and at times we can say truly, "We beheld his glory"; yet how faintly does it shine to us! How much more often is it hidden than revealed! How seldom do we receive from it the joy, and the comfort, and the quickening which it should unceasingly impart! We get but a few rays when we might get the whole sun. We get but these rays at intervals when we might have unbroken sunshine every hour. Ought not Christ's words to rebuke us and to recall us to faith? "Did I not say unto you, that if you believe, you would see the glory of God."

IV. CHRIST CALLS US FROM UNBELIEF TO FAITH.

Both of these things are implied in the words, "*Did I not tell you that if you **believed**, you would see the glory of God?*" He is evidently not giving this reproof for the first time. He is repeating what He said to them often times before; and He is reminding them of his former lessons and exhortations, which they were on the point of forgetting: "Did I not tell you..." The words are simple, and the rebuke is gently spoken; but the question is designed to reach the conscience and humble the unbelieving spirit. "Did I not tell you"

that is, "Have I not, not only on this occasion—but often at other times, told you what faith would do for you, and what unbelief is shutting you out from; and shall I say it all in vain?"

Yes, it is to faith that the Son of God is here calling us; it is against unbelief that He is warning us. Unbelief never did anything for a soul, and never will; faith has done wonders in time past, and will do so in all present time, as well as in all time to come. "Have faith in God!" "Only believe." Do not be faithless—but believing. Trust God for everything, and say, even in the most unlikely circumstances, *Is there anything too hard for the Lord?*

The circumstances in which the two sisters of Bethany were placed were trying. What could they hope for? Had the Lord arrived in time, they might have hoped that He would have healed their brother. But He had, apparently, arrived too late. Lazarus was dead; and were they to hope for resurrection? Our Lord did not exactly say this; but He evidently meant to tell them that, if they would but trust Him, they would find that He would do something for them far beyond what they could ask or think—that there was nothing which He would not do for them—no length to which He would not go in the putting forth of his power to show them the glory of God. Their position was, after all, not more trying than Abraham's, when called on to offer up his son; and if he believed, if he hoped against hope and was strong in faith, giving glory to God, why should not they do the same? As children of believing Abraham, to whom the "God of glory" appeared, might not the Lord well address them, "Did I not say unto you, that, if you would believe, you would see the glory of God."

In these words of Christ there is a tone of sorrowful complaint; more, we may say of displeasure and disappointment, because of the slow faith of his disciples. It is like that indicated in his words to the disciples, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet have you not known me, Philip?" He expected something else; and He had reason to. He looked for confidence, and He had given them full ground for such confidence. What, after all He had said and done, still as hesitating, as suspicious, as distrustful as ever! Could He have expected this at their hands?

Let Christ's words shame us out of our unbelief. The rebuke is mild—but all the more fitted to find its way into our hearts. Be ashamed of your hard thoughts of this gracious One, after all that He has done. Be ashamed of your misgivings, your doubtings, your dark distrust. Trust Him wholly and

fully. Trust Him according to this infinite trustworthiness. Trust Him in everything. Trust Him now. Trust Him in your days of darkness, as well as in your days of light. Trust him in your sorrows as well as your joys. Do not say, *My case is hopeless, my wound is incurable*; I may tolerate it; but as to deliverance, or blessing, or glory as the result, that is impossible. Your case is not more hopeless than that woman whom the Lord rebuked for her unbelief; "Did I not say unto you, that, if you would believe, you should see the glory of God."

Good out of all evil, life out of all death, glory out of all shame, joy out of all sorrow; this is God's law and purpose for everyone who believes in his name. Time may be needed for the unfolding of the outcomes; patience may be long and sorely tried; the results may be long in emerging from beneath the dark surface under which they were pressed down; but of the end there can be no doubt. Let faith hold fast; let patience have her perfect work; and, according to our faith and patience, no, far beyond them, shall be the reward. **Hannah** found it; and was made to rejoice in a long-sought son. **Naomi** found it; and her old age was brightened beyond all her hopes or fears. **Job** found it; for, having held fast his confidence, he lived to see his latter end better than his beginning. Yet we forget this gracious law of the kingdom, and often times lose heart, when the trial is long and the shadows hang thickly over us. We take hold, and again we lose hold. We are cheered, and again we despair. How continually we need to be reminded of the sure reward of faith, and to have the Lord's words spoken to us, "*Did I not tell you that if you **believed**, you would see the glory of God?*"

Lesson Sixteen

Inquiring After Jesus

They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus." – John 12:21

It was from Gentile lips that these words came. A Jew would perhaps have said, in such circumstances, We would see this Christ; the Greek, who knows nothing about the Messiah—but hears of a wonder-working Galilean, says, "We would see Jesus," that is, "we wish to see Him." Was this a genuine Gentile longing, expressive of the world's desire, for "the Desire of all nations,"—the utterance of a poor human heart that had heard of something likely to fill up its void—the outgoing of feelings, such as drew the publicans and sinners to hear Him—the vague cry of humanity, "Who will show us any good"—brought at last to a point?

We do not know. We cannot answer these questions, for there is nothing in the narrative to illustrate the words; to tell who these Greeks were; in what spirit they put the request; or what was the answer. The narrative is abrupt and isolated. The words stand alone. Philip comes and tells Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. That is all we know. That Jesus received them, or showed Himself to them, or spoke directly to them, is not said. Probably the discourse that follows was spoken in their hearing, though mainly intended for the disciples. They were brought in to the circle of disciples, as listeners to the gracious words which He proceeded to speak concerning Himself—his life, his death, his resurrection.

I. THREE KINDS OF INQUIRERS AFTER JESUS.

(1.) Herod who desired more than once to see Him (Luke 9:9, 13:8).

His was a curiosity that came to nothing. How many Herods are there!

(2.) Zaccheus.

His curiosity came to something. It ended in a visit of Jesus Himself. There are Zaccheuses, too, whose first inquiries are vague—but who are led on by the Spirit to Jesus.

(3.) The Greeks.

These seem to have been farther on than Zaccheus in their inquiries. Theirs was more than curiosity; it was the earnest longing of men who had got a glimpse of Him. We have Greeks, too, in our day; men whose souls God has touched, and across whose eyes He has flashed some rays of the glory of his Incarnate Son. Are there any Greeks among us? Do not rest; keep do not be distant; come near; learn of Him; look to Him and be saved. This is how the far-off Gentile is brought near; and the Greek becomes a Son of Abraham.

Is there a Herod here? Beware and tremble. You may be lost. Your curiosity may end in nothing. Be a Zaccheus or a Greek. Jesus was not unwilling to be seen. He was the most accessible of men. Talk of kind, winning, accessible, large-hearted men! Was there ever one like Him? He did not hide Himself; He did not turn from his fellow men, as if shrinking from their communion or disliking to be troubled. He made everybody feel at home with Him. He laid Himself out for meeting them, and being visited by them. He received sinners, and made them feel that He had come to save them.

Modestly these Greeks first approach the disciples, and through them are introduced to the Master. They did not need to approach Him in such a round about way. Had they known Jesus better, they would have approached Him more directly and He would say, "Allow them to come," even when the disciples rebuked and forbade. And so is it still with us. We trust the disciple more than the Master. We go with confidence to a minister—but we go distrusting to the Lord. What unbelief, what perversity, what ignorance! How little have we learned his love!

"We would see Jesus" is the daily utterance of our heart. If we have seen little, we want to see much; if we have seen much, we want to see more. *Show us Jesus!* is our cry.

II. WHY DO WE DESIRE TO SEE JESUS?

(1.) It gives rest.

To see Him as the resting-place is to rest. There are some objects so calm and restful, that the very sight of them is rest. This is one of them; the chief of them.

(2.) It pacifies.

He is our peace; and to see Him is to have peace. The sight of Him as the atoning sacrifice for sin pacifies the conscience.

(3.) It quickens.

He is our life; and the sight of Him as such puts life into us. It is a quickening vision.

(4.) It heals.

As the Sun of righteousness. He rises on us with healing. There is health in looking to this sun of health.

(5.) It enlightens.

He is the light of the world; and to see Him as such is to have day within us. It is an enlightening vision.

(6.) It sets free.

He and his truth make us free. Connection with Him is liberty. The vision liberates. It thaws the soul, and melts all our ice.

(7.) It strengthens.

All power is in Him; and the sight of Him draws it out to us. We become strong in looking.

(8.) It fills.

In Him is all fullness; and in looking we are filled. Every void in our souls disappears.

(9.) It gladdens.

We are made partakers of his joy. We are satisfied. It is gladdening and satisfying!

Lesson Seventeen

The Great Attraction

"But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself." — John 12:32.

This is Christ's own testimony to the power of his death and resurrection. Both of these are included. The Christ of God is lifted up to the cross—and there is power in that; the Christ of God is lifted out of the grave—and there is power in that.

Mark the kind of power. It is not destructive, or repulsive, or punitive; it is attractive. It draws. It is not compulsive or harsh—but simply attractive. The sun draws up the vapors from the sea, and then hangs a brilliant rainbow on them; so Christ draws up the sons of men from the depths of our low world, and glorifies them. His attraction is like that of the sun. His attraction is magnetic, too; it is the attraction of the magnet to the pole. As the far-distant north pole, by an unseen influence, lays hold on the motionless iron and turns it to itself, so does the far-off Golgotha, our truer, better pole, draw the sons of men, and cluster them round itself. Have you felt the magnetic virtue of the cross and grave of Christ? Have they acted upon you?

It is not simply the Christ that is the magnet; it is the crucified Christ. It is crucifixion that has imparted to Him his attractive power; just as it is death that has given Him his life-giving power. It is not Christ without the cross; nor is it the cross without Christ; it is both of them together.

But mark the greatness of the power. It is sufficient to draw all men, but it has not drawn all men. There are millions in hell who shall never be drawn. There are millions upon earth who are not yet drawn. Yet there is virtue in the crucified one to draw every one. It is almighty influence; irresistible power; power which no human heart could have resisted, had it so pleased the Father to put it forth. A power that could draw the myriads of stars and planets, and cluster them round itself, must be great; but a power that can draw millions of human hearts must be greater far.

Christ and the Cross attracts —

I. BECAUSE OF THE LOVE WHICH IT EMBODIES.

In this is love! The love which passes knowledge! The love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord. Christ crucified, dead, buried, risen, is the great revelation of the grace of God.

II. BECAUSE OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IT EXHIBITS.

This great sight is one of infinite righteousness. It is the cross of righteousness; the resurrection of righteousness. It is for the unrighteous, and yet it is righteous. It is righteousness combining with love and taking the sinner's side against law and judgment and the eternal penalty. How attractive is righteousness like this!

III. BECAUSE OF THE TRUTH WHICH IT PROCLAIMS.

All God's revealed truth is connected with the cross. Divine wisdom is concentrated there. In Jesus, the crucified, there is the wisdom of God. In the cross we have the refutation of man's errors and Satan's lies; the great embodiment of heavenly and everlasting truth. Here all truth and all wisdom are centered! How can it but be attractive to us!

IV. BECAUSE OF THE RECONCILIATION WHICH IT PROPOSES.

It proposes peace to the sinner; for it has made peace. Jesus has made peace by the blood of his cross. Peace to him that is afar off and to him that is near! Here is the meeting-place between man and God. Here we stand and say, "Be reconciled."

V. BECAUSE OF THE HEALING WHICH IT BRINGS.

There is healing in its shadow. The one who touches is healed—healed in every part. The healing begins now in the soul; it is completed hereafter in the resurrection of the body. Jesus, the dead and risen One is our healer! In this healing we include not simple relief from pain, or weariness, or spiritual infirmity—but deliverance from sin. The cross purifies. The fullness of the crucified One is the fountain of our holiness.

Lesson Eighteen

Light and its Little While

"Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light." – John 12:35-36

The speaker here was one who knew what light was, what it could do, where it was to be found, and how terrible it must be to be without it. He had come from the land of light, where there was no darkness, and where all were walking in the light. In that home of light there were angels of light and spirits of light. All sons of light! He speaks, therefore, with authority, and we know that his words are true.

I. THE LIGHT.

Light is that which shows or reveals all objects, as darkness is that which hides. Our earthly sun daily reveals to us man and the things of man; the heavenly sun reveals to us God and the things of God. Christ is Himself that light. He is both the light and the sun. As the life, He is the light. The life is the light of man. He is the light of the world; the true light; beside which all other lights are false and unreal. That which shines from his face, from his works, from his words, from his cross—is light. We look to Him and are lightened. He reveals the Father; the Father's love, the Father's righteousness, the Father's character; all the riches of his grace; and we, opening our eyes to take in this light, are thereby enlightened. That which shines into us is "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." Light for a dark world! Light for a dark soul! This is our message.

II. THE LIGHT WITH US.

The first gleam of it came in the first promise. After that the rays multiplied. But still "the light" had not come. But when "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," then it came. It remained here in human form for thirty-three years. It is still, though impersonally, "with us "; and it will yet be more gloriously with us when He comes again. After Jesus had spoken of the

light being with them, he withdrew Himself—to show that his presence was the light, and to show the difference between light and darkness, his presence and his absence. Yes; the light is with us still. In a sense it is withdrawn, yet still with us; still in our world; still shining in its brightness out of the testimony concerning "the light" left us in the gospels. There the true light still shines. We may withdraw from it—but it never withdraws from us. We may shut our eyes and our windows—but the light still shines. God is light, God is love, is still the theme of that testimony. The light is not far off nor clouded—but near and clear; not starlight nor moonlight—but sunlight—pure, bright, and gladdening. The light shines in darkness, and the darkness does not comprehend it. O dark world, when will you let in the light! O dark soul, O child of darkness, when will you be enlightened.

III. THE "LITTLE WHILE" OF LIGHT.

The special little while referred to here was that of our Lord's presence on earth—a blessed little while indeed! He is so near, so gracious, so willing to bless! But there are other little whiles. Jerusalem had her little while. Israel had her little while. The churches have all had or are having their little while. The nations have had or are having their little while. Each congregation has its little while. Each soul has its little while. A little while of the gospel, a little while of invitations from God, a little while of Sabbaths, and sermons, and sacraments, and providences—and all is done. The light departs. O man what has the light done for you? How have you been dealing with it? Have you let it in or shut it out? Your little while of light may soon be at an end. The night comes! The eternal darkness is at hand! Jesus is coming; but not with light; only with darkness to those who despise the light.

IV. THE USING OF THE LIGHT.

Walking is used here as a general expression for the whole of a man's life, in all its actings, and changes, and movements. Our Lord's meaning is, "Use this light for whatever you do, so long as you have it: do everything in your daily life, in this light." Use this light then, is the Lord's message to us. The process of using it is then described.

(1.) Believe in the light.

Receive the Father's testimony to this light, to its genuineness, its excellency, its divinity, its suitableness, to meet the needs of a child

of darkness. Believe in this light, and believe in no other. The light of reason, intellect, literature, science, will do nothing for your soul. At best it is but starlight, "distinct but distant; clear—but oh how cold"; still more often it is the meteor, or the lightning, or the volcano, or the candle or the spark of your own kindling. Believe in this heavenly and divine light. It will suffice. There is no darkness too dense for it either within you or without. There is light for the darkness. God proclaims his testimony concerning this true light. Receive that testimony, and, on receiving it, receive the light. It needs admission into you! Oh admit it!

(2.) Become children of the light.

He whom the light enters into becomes a child of light. The light rests on him; surrounds him; abides with him; dwells in him; pervades him. It guides him; heals him; comforts and cheers him; purifies him; assimilates him to himself. He becomes in all senses a child of light and of the day. He becomes, also, a light to others—a light to the world. And walking in the light, he is not only filled with holy gladness—but he shines; his light shines; the dark world is the better for his being in it. He shines in his daily walk and public life. He is in his own way a measure what "the light" was when here—a "light of the world."

V. THE REFUSAL TO USE THE LIGHT.

This may be called neglect, or delay, or hatred, or rejection—still it is refusal to make use of the light. It is preference of the darkness to the light; it is preference of the works of darkness to the works of light. It is something positive and willful whatever men may say. No man remains in darkness for lack of light—but because of his own shutting out of the light. This refusal to make use of the light leads to stumbling, to straying, to complete mistaking of the way, and losing the destination. It leads to this now; it ends in this more terribly. For the withdrawal of the light is at hand. The darkness comes—the deep, the eternal darkness, in which men, who have rejected the light, shall stumble and wander forever. O these eternal stumblings! These everlasting wanderings! O these dark mountains, on which the sinner's feet shall stumble! O that gross darkness, that palpable darkness, that blackness of darkness, which is to be the sinner's portion and dwelling-place forever! Night without morning! Everlasting midnight!

The true light now shines! This is our message. All the love of God is in it. All the joy of heaven is in it. All the glory of the kingdom is in it. It shines now; it may soon pass away! Oh use it sinner, use it. Allow it to enter; and, in entering, to transform that dark dungeon of your soul into a very heaven of light.

Lesson Nineteen

Light for the World's Darkness

"I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness." – John 12:46

It is Christ who is the speaker. He speaks of two things: of Himself, and of our world. Let us hear what He has to tell us concerning both.

I. OUR WORLD IS DARK.

God did not make that way at first. He said, Let there be light. But man has darkened it; Satan has darkened it; sin has darkened it. Every soul in it is darkness. Night is in all, and over all.

(1.) It is the darkness of sleep.

The sleeper does not see the light. He may dream that he sees it—but that is all. His eyes are closed.

(2.) It is the darkness of death.

Life has left the limbs and organs; and with life all light has fled. Darkness reigns.

(3.) It is the darkness of the tomb.

This is the very death of death. Buried beneath the earth, the darkness is doubled.

(4.) It is the darkness of Satan.

He is the ruler of the darkness of this world; and of this darkness we are partakers.

(5.) It is the darkness of hell.

Our dark world is a pledge of the blackness of darkness forever. As little as men want to believe it, it is the shadow of hell that covers our earth, and it is a part of hell itself that fills the sinner's soul. Such is

our world's darkness. Such is the condition of each sinner's soul. How sad, how terrible!

II. THERE IS LIGHT FOR IT.

Deep as the darkness is, it is not hopeless. There is enough of light in God and in heaven yet. Light has not been quenched throughout the universe though driven from our world. Darkness is wide—but it is not universal. The report has come to us of light. And this is good news. There is light.

III. THIS LIGHT HAS COME.

It is not far off; but near. Not in heaven alone; it has come down to earth. Oh, what an arrival! The richest shipment that ever reached our shores! The gospel announces not light only—but its arrival. It has come! He himself has said, "I am come."

IV. CHRIST IS THE LIGHT.

He is the brightness of Yahweh's glory; the true light; the sun of righteousness; the daystar; the bright and morning star. All the light of Godhead is centered in him. All the light of heaven; all the light of the universe is gathered into him. He has come to be the light of the world. He is the alpha and omega of the Bible, which is the one book of light. He is the light of the world in three ways:

(1.) Because of what he shows us of the Father.

He is the revealer of the Father, and of the Father's love and holiness; as such, He is the dispeller of the clouds that have long rested over earth, hiding the face of God. The glory of Godhead is embodied in Him, and shines forth from Him to us; and He who has seen Him has seen the Father.

(2.) Because of what He does to us.

He pardons, heals, comforts, blesses, saves. As the Savior, He is our light. As the Christ of God, He is our light. As Prophet, Priest, and King He is our light.

(3.) Because of what He is yet to do for our world.

When He comes again He shall be fully known as the world's light. Then shall be earth's true morning and noon; until then it is but twilight. His throne shall be the throne of light; his reign shall be the reign of light. All earth shall rejoice in his light.

V. THE WAY IN WHICH THE LIGHT ENTERS.

It is in believing. Not in working or waiting—but in believing. Faith ends the darkness, and lets in the glorious light. Believe in Jesus and all is light. The day breaks and the shadows flee away.

VI. THE FREENESS AND UNIVERSALITY OF THE LIGHT.

The words, “*no one who believes in me should stay in darkness,*” is enough to make every sinner feel that the light is for him; that he has liberty to use the light; that he has a right to the light; and his right is that he needs it. The darkness needs the light; so the sinner needs Christ. No, and Christ needs the sinner! For the light needs the darkness, or else its glory would be wasted.

Oh, what a glorious gospel do these words of Jesus preach to us. “*I have come into the world as a light.*”

Lesson Twenty

The Judging Word

“There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.” – John 12:48

I. THERE IS A LAST DAY.

This world shall not always roll on. There shall be a stoppage, a break. God shall step in at some time. He shall speak and not be silent. It is God's day that is coming. He has appointed a day. Not "the last" in one sense; for there shall be no last day either to righteous or wicked. But in reference to the existing state, and order, and run of things and events, there is a last day, a winding up, a reckoning. The world's great river shall at last reach the sea. "Tomorrow" shall then cease, and that word of mystery, and procrastination, and suspense will be known no more.

II. THAT DAY SHALL BE ONE OF JUDGMENT.

The long unsettled cases of earth shall be settled then. Time's riddles shall all be solved. Time's mysteries shall all be cleared up. Time's wrongs shall all be righted. The oppressed shall be vindicated; the triumphing of the wicked shall cease; the evildoer shall be put to shame. No more error, or unbelief or falsehood, or wrong judgment upon men and things. No calling good evil, and evil good; no putting light for darkness, or darkness for light. No shams, no shadows, no mockeries, no dishonesties, no hypocrisies. All shall be transparency, light, truth, righteousness. The judgment shall be just; undoing the evil; establishing and perfecting the good; no partiality; no respect of people; no fear of man; no bribery nor corrupt influence; no hesitations nor imperfect decisions. The Judge is righteous, and his sentences will be righteous like Himself.

III. CHRIST'S WORD SHALL JUDGE US.

Not that this word is to supersede the Judge—but it will form the test, the ground of judgment. We can imagine, in connection with that word, such questions as these arising.

(1.) Did that word reach you?

Were you within the circle to which that word came? Did it fall on your ears?

(2.) Did you listen to it?

Did you open both ear and heart to it? Or, did you spend your lives in listening to something else—other words, other people?

(3.) Did you treat it as a true word?

It is true, infinitely true, altogether true; did you treat it as such? Or, was the treatment you gave it like that of a person who saw no truth in it? Did you profess to receive it as true, but then treat it as untrue?

(4.) Did you treat it as accurate?

It is thoroughly so. There is no flaw, no mistake, no imperfection in it. Did you treat it as such, or did you try to find fault with it to prove it to be incorrect and imperfect, perhaps contradictory? Did you quibble at it as not quite satisfactory or sufficient, in order to get away from the tremendous pressure of responsibility on the conscience arising out of a perfect word.

(5.) Did you treat it as divine?

It is divine; for He who spoke it is the Son of God. His word is not merely perfect and superhuman—but divine; divine in its origin, in its substance, in its form—directly divine. Did you treat it as such? Did you reverence it, submit to it, implicitly receive it? If not, then you are truly guilty—just as if you refused to worship God. He who does not treat Christ's words as divine, is in the same sense guilty of blasphemy, as he who denies His person to be divine. Men are to honor Him and His words, even as they honor the Father and His words.

(6.) Did you accept it as suitable to yourself?

It does concern you, very closely and powerfully. It bears on you just now in time; still even more so in eternity. He meant it for you. He

spoke it for you. He directed it so as to suit you, and to reach you. It meets your case. It contains what you need—peace with God and life eternal. Did you accept it as such? Did you receive it not only as a faithful saying—but as worthy of all acceptance? Or did you pass it by as unneeded and unsuitable? Did you treat it with indifference as if you were not concerned in it? Did you reject it? Did you say, I did not need it, so I flung it away from me?

By this word, then, let us judge ourselves just now, so we may not be condemned by it in that great day. It is a living word; quick and powerful, like Him who spoke it. Let us apply it. What has it done for us? Has it brought us near to God? Has it set us in the position of pardoned men? Has it poured in peace and light? Has it done, and is it doing for us, such things as these? It was meant to do so. Is it doing so?

Remember, it is a judging, testing, discerning word. It is sharper than a two-edged sword. It will not allow itself to be trifled with. It carries its own judgment, its own vengeance within it. It demands immediate reception; and it promises, upon that reception, immediate forgiveness, and an everlasting salvation. He who receives the word of the Amen, the true and faithful witness, shall be saved. There is no "if," no "perhaps," no doubting about it. It is a present certainty; and a certainty as absolute as it is present. In that word is life, peace, pardon, reconciliation; and the moment that faith touches that word, all these flow out into the soul. Yes; he who believes shall be saved; but he who believes not shall be damned.

Lesson Twenty-One

The Revelation of the Father

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work." – John 14:8-10

Jesus frequently spoke to His disciples about the Father. Sometimes "my Father," sometimes "your Father," sometimes "the Father." They knew whom He meant, Yaweh, Israel's God. But when He spoke of their knowing the Father, and of having seen Him; of His going to the Father, and preparing a place for them in the Father's house, and taking them to be there with them, they seemed bewildered, some asking one question, and some another, in their ignorance and perplexity. His words had roused their interest—but not satisfied it. He had pointed them to an object and a Being of whom they felt they knew but little. What is this place, and where is this way, and who is this Being of whom He speaks? Eye and ear are turned in the direction to which He is pointing.

I. THE REQUEST.

"Show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Philip spoke for his brothers as well as for himself. He speaks for us also.

(1.) It is a proper request.

It is neither curiosity nor foolishness which dictate it. It is one naturally and obviously suggested by the words of Christ; one which he meant to be suggested, and which He meant to comply with.

(2.) It is an intelligent request.

Philip knew what he was asking, though there was much ignorance about His question. It is not vague. It bears on a definite object. It fixes on a certain desirable point, which it would sincerely have cleared up. It knows what it needs.

(3.) It is an earnest request.

Christ's words have roused him into earnestness. He feels as if he ought to know and must know the Father. Other requests may take a denial, this will not. It is a life and death request; "For this is life eternal, that they may know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."

(4.) It is a noble request.

There is something elevated about it; nothing low or trivial. It was worthy of Him to whom it was addressed, and about whom it was made.

(5.) It is a satisfying request.

"Show us the Father, and that will be enough..." The blessing asked would fill the soul. The knowledge of the Father would be all that was needed. Other sights might fill it in part, this would fill it all.

Have their longings found their way into you? Has this request been the expression of them? Do you know the Father? And what has the knowledge of the Father done for you? Has it filled you? Has it weaned you from all other knowledge, and made you say, *This is enough!* Are you recognized among men as those who "know the Father?"

II. THE REBUKE.

It is the utterance of surprise and disappointment. The request was not a wrong one; but it would not have needed to be asked had they not been so slow of heart to see and to believe. The reproof is gentle, yet very decided. In it Christ lays his finger on the seat of the evil, and shows how the question revealed an ignorance which ought not to have existed. It is an appeal to themselves, to their past history and conversations with Him; to their opportunities of knowing His words, His doings, Himself. Have these years of communion been of no benefit? Have my words and miracles done nothing? Have you not fathomed me, seen through me, interpreted me? Has all been in vain? *"Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time?"* After all that has been said and done, is it not strange that you should still put the question? At first it was natural; now, after so long a time, it is strange—all but incredible. How is it that you

have not known me? Have I kept back anything? Have I used obscure words? Has my life been ambiguous? Have you not known me? How can you say, *Show us the Father?*

III. THE ANSWER.

I have shown you the Father. How and where? In myself. When? All the time I have been with you. I and the Father are one. You could not see me without seeing the Father.

Christ, then, is the Revealer of the Father; the promoter of the Father's mind; the interpreter of the Father's character and purpose. The Word was made flesh in order to show us God—that we might see Him with our eyes, hear Him with our ears, touch Him with our hands, speak with him face to face as a man with his friend. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life; for the Life was manifested" (1 John 1:1, 2). When asked, How shall I realize God? we answer, Realize Christ. How shall we go to God? Go to Christ. Look into his face; kneel before Him, as the leper did; deal with Him, as the blind and deaf did when He was here. He is in the Father, and the Father in Him. His works and words are the works and words of the Father. His love, and grace, and pity are those of the Father. Know Christ, then, and you know the Father.

What **LESSONS** can we learn from this?:

(1.) We are slow to learn.

"Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." When we might have been teachers, we need to be taught the principles of the oracles of God. Slow to hear, slow to learn, slow to believe—this is our character.

(2.) Jesus is swift to teach.

Strange contrast. We are slow to learn, but He swift and ready to teach. If we are not wise, it is not our teacher's fault. "Learn of me," is his message to us daily.

(3.) He teaches us about the Father.

The Father shows us the Son, and the son shows us the Father. The invisible is seen in the visible. If we want to know the unseen God, let us go to Bethlehem, to Nazareth, to Calvary. If we are perplexed about Him who is a Spirit. let us go to Him who has a body like ourselves. He will reveal the Father.

Lesson Twenty-Two

The Abiding Comforter

“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth: whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him: ye know him; for he abideth with you, and shall be in you.” – John 14:16-17 (ASV)

Christ expects us to love Him. He claims our love, and He deserves it all. He has done enough to win it. May He not then most reasonably ask the question, "Do you love me?"

Christ expects us to "keep his commandments," that is to listen to his teachings, and to observe all his "instructions," for this is the meaning of commandments. This is the necessary result and manifestation of our love. Love and obey; love and listen; love and follow; love and keep my words.

To those who love and listen He promises much. What is there that He will withhold from them? But here, it is of one thing only that He speaks—the Holy Spirit. This Spirit He is to obtain from the Father for those who hear his voice; and in this Spirit is contained everything they need for life, and peace, and consolation. O gift of the Holy Spirit, what is there that you do not contain for us! Let us mark the things connected with this gift, of which the Lord here speaks to us.

I. A COMFORTER.

The word is a wide one. It means one who comforts, or who pleads, or who exhorts; one who "calls us to his side," as a father does his child when he has some special thing to say. The Holy Spirit is all this to us. How little we use Him, or trust Him, or lean on Him, or love Him, or deal with Him. And how much we suffer loss by this neglect! How much do we grieve and displease Him! We might be so much more full of peace, and light, and love, and holiness, and strength, and comfort—if we would just employ this "Comforter" more constantly, more trustfully. Our desponding complaints are all indications of our slighting Him! We will not allow Him to do his work nor to bestow his love.

II. ANOTHER COMFORTER.

This word "another" is full of meaning, and helps to link the Holy Spirit and Jesus together. His office is not to hide but to show Jesus; not to make us forget—but remember Him.

(1.) Another instead of myself;

I am going—but He is coming. He will fill up my place; my place of fellowship, counsel, comfort, and love. He will be to you, for consolation, what I have been to you.

(2.) Another like myself.

He will be another, and yet not another; one in mind and sympathy with myself towards you. In having Him you have me.

(3.) Another in addition to myself.

I am still with you, though I am going away.

And in addition to my presence, you shall have the presence of another like one like myself who is divine. Two Comforters instead of one; the outward and visible presence gone—but the inward and invisible presence doubled; double blessing, double consolation, double strength. Surely the "love of Christ" and "the love of the Spirit" will prove sufficient for our joy, as the power of Christ and the power of the Spirit are enough for our help.

III. A COMFORTER WHO IS THE GIFT OF THE FATHER.

At first He was the "promise of the Father," and then He is "the gift of the Father." It is He of whom Jesus speaks (John 4:10), "If you knew the gift of God." He is as truly the gift of the Father, and the one sent of the Father, as is Christ himself. So we are doubly linked to the Father. Both of these are "unspeakable gifts"; both are presented to us freely, that we may use them and be blessed. "If you, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him." It is the Father's good pleasure that we should receive the Holy Spirit; that we should be baptized with the Spirit from on high. Then shall we live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit, and pray in the Spirit, and be filled with the Spirit. We shall be vessels which the Father fills, and keeps forever full.

IV. A COMFORTER WHO IS THE FRUIT OF CHRIST'S INTERCESSION.

"I will pray the Father, and he shall give..." The word pray seems here to refer to Christ's priestly dealings, his consultation or communication with the Father, like the High Priest with Urim and Thummin, "I will pray—and He will give!" He speaks as our High Priest dealing with God for us. He specifically deals with God regarding the gift of the Comforter. He did so when He ascended on high and was glorified. He does so continually still. There is always the praying, and always the giving. He has received the Holy Spirit as the Father's gift; and with Him and in Him all other gifts; gifts that are the expression of the Father's love and of his own. So we deal with Him; and He deals with the Father for us. Him the Father hears always; more, to Him the Father says, "Ask of me and I will give you" (Psalm 2:8).

V. A COMFORTER WHO SHALL ABIDE WITH US FOREVER.

The words are more exactly "unto the age," that is until the coming age or time of Christ's return, implying the Spirit's special presence during Christ's absence. Not as if He were to leave us on Christ's return. But his special work as Comforter is during his absence. He comes to fill up a blank made by the Lord's departure; to cheer the afflicted widow; to care for the little flock; to console and defend the orphaned family. These offices are peculiar to the interval between his first and second comings. But He himself is the Church's everlasting guest. As the Comforter He will not always be needed; but as the Holy Spirit He will be needed forever. The temple cannot be without that which is its glory; and we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. At present we receive Him as the Comforter; hereafter we shall know Him in other characters and offices. As He is the "eternal Spirit," so He is the Church's eternal guest; each saint's eternal indweller. "The communion of the Holy Spirit" (2 Corinthians 13:14) is that which no time, no change can affect; which neither life nor death, things present, or things to come, can dissolve.

VI. A COMFORTER WHO IS THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH.

In Him is all truth; He is the Spirit of Him who is truth; He is the Spirit who communicates the truth to the soul. In a world of falsehood and an age of error, how needful is such a Spirit. Truth is that which is agreeable to Him; error is that which He hates. It is in opposition to this Spirit of truth that the lie of the last days comes especially forth—"the strong delusion" leading

men to "believe the lie." It is this Spirit of truth whom we are to seek fellowship with; and to do so specially by cultivating the knowledge of the word of his truth.

VII. A COMFORTER REJECTED BY THE WORLD.

The world, or "seed of the serpent," or race of the ungodly, see no need for such a Spirit at all. It can do without Him. It is bondage to recognize Him. By means of science or reason—it can do without the Spirit; it can find its way to truth without surrendering its liberty! The world "cannot receive" Him; that is, repels and rejects Him; for it does not perceive Him or his actions or his sayings; it is thoroughly ignorant of Him. It prefers to remain without the knowledge of Him at all. The world is not only the rejecter of Christ—but of the Holy Spirit. Is not this the special sin of our intellectual age?

VIII. A COMFORTER ACCEPTED BY ALL CHRIST'S DISCIPLES.

"You know Him!" He is no stranger to you. He is your companion, teacher, advocate, friend, and comforter. You cannot do without Him. He "dwells with you"; He is ever at your side; He is and shall be in you; filling you as his house, his temple, his holy vessels. *Filled with the Spirit*—is not that the description of a Christian man? "Having not the Spirit," is that not the description of a man of the world? O disciple of the Lord, prize this gift of the ascended Christ, even the Comforter. Cherish Him, and delight in his fellowship. Live in the Spirit; walk in the Spirit; pray in the Spirit. So shall you be a holy and blessed man.

Lesson Twenty-Three

The Mighty Comforter

"But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you." – John 14:26 (ASV)

Christ's presence with his disciples was a blessed thing, and his absence would be a blank. Yet there was to be a substitute or successor; one who would comfort them in the Master's absence, and carry on his instructions; bringing the old to remembrance, yet adding new of his own.

It is of this Spirit that our text speaks; not as if He were an unknown being up to this point; but still revealing Him more fully and gloriously than before; the church's birthright; seal; everything needed during her Lord's absence. To bring this out let us take up the designations given here to Him; not in the exact order in which they occur; but with a slight change in order to bring out the connection of the one with the other. He is, then—

I. THE HOLY SPIRIT.

As Christ is called "the Word," so He is called "the Spirit," intimating his nature as well as his office. The third person of the Godhead is expressly called "the Spirit," and "a Spirit;" the truest manifestation of the spiritual character and being of that God who is a Spirit. He is "the Holy Spirit" through whom the holiness of the Godhead reveals itself, and is communicated to the creature. He is particularly the doer of holy deeds, the speaker of holy words, the maker of holy men. As the Holy Spirit, he dwelt in the Holy One—and dwells in the church, and in all "saints."

II. THE SENT OF THE FATHER.

Christ gets this name also—"he whom the Father has sent." Both are "sent of God." But the Holy Spirit comes because of Christ ("in my name"). Christ came simply as the gift of the Father's love. Christ is the first gift, the Holy Spirit is the second. He comes to us, then, from the Father; the Father's messenger, to do the Father's will in us; the glorifier of the Son; He comes in love, in holy love, as the fruit of Christ's intercession, as the seal set to

Christ's name, and the token of the honor with which God honors that name.

III. THE COMFORTER.

This is his special name in connection with the church—the Paraclete, or Comforter. "Another Comforter." This is his special office and errand. It is his mission, and He discharges it, not simply because of the covenant or commandment—but in love. He is the Spirit of love. He comes, then, to comfort. To comfort because of what—under what?

(1.) Christ's absence.

Not to make us content with it—but to cheer us under Christ's absence.

(2.) The sorrows of life.

These are many—"Many are the afflictions of the righteous," but under them there is an all-wise, almighty, all-loving Comforter. What sorrow can withstand his consolations?

(3.) The delay of the kingdom.

Even had there been no tribulation, the delay of the inheritance would have called for patience, and this He supplies. He sustains us under the sickness of deferred hope. Accordingly, He is "the Comforter." He has been so; is so; and will be so until the Lord comes. Have we used Him as such? Have we partaken of his fullness? Have we tasted the abundance of the everlasting consolation which He administers? Or do we try to be our own comforters? Do we seek human comforters? Do we try to forget our sorrows? Or do we take all to Him, acknowledging his name and mission, and rejoicing at all occasions and opportunities of employing Him as the Comforter? How much we lose by not going to Him as such, using him as such?

IV. THE TEACHER.

This is another of the names which He has in common with Christ. Christ taught; Christ teaches still. But now He does this not through the living voice or visible example—but by the agency of the Spirit. He teaches as no

man can, as no book can, as no school or college can. He teaches all things; there is not anything which we need that He will not or cannot teach. He teaches truly, effectually, lovingly. He suits himself to the mental and spiritual state of every scholar. Like Christ, He has "compassion on the ignorant." Let this teacher teach you!

V. THE ONE WHO REMEMBERS.

Besides teaching "all things," He is in particular to recall the Lord's own words. How often the disciples must have wished for more retentive memories to keep hold of the precious words daily spoken! Here is something even better than that—a divine memory put at their disposal—memory perfect, complete, unerring. Is this not blessed? How seldom we think of the Spirit's work upon the memory. We speak of his enlightening the understanding, renewing the will, changing the heart; how seldom do we dwell upon his work on the memory. Yet here it is. For surely this is not meant to be confined to the disciples. Go, then, to the Holy Spirit for a memory; and He will make it as retentive as you need; not, perhaps, as you would like; that may not be good for you.

Oh, let us cultivate acquaintance with the three persons in the Godhead. Let us deal with the Spirit about Christ; and with Christ about the Spirit.

Lesson Twenty-Four

The Divine Legacy of Peace

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." – John 14:27

Surely "never any man spoke like this man!" It is understandable why men might wonder at the gracious words which proceeded out of his lips. Grace was poured into his lips, and out of his lips grace flowed forth to the sons of men. He had the tongue of the knowledgeable, that he might speak words in season to the weary (Isaiah 1:4), and blessed were the words he spoke to them.

Never did anyone enter so deeply and tenderly into our feelings; anticipating, with his words of sympathy and consolation, every sorrow and need! What love is here! What thoughtfulness and sympathy! What majesty too! For who but one who knew that He had come from God and was going to God—that He Himself was the infinite source of peace—could say, "Peace I leave with you," etc. The words here uttered are certainly the assurance to us of the love and power of the Promiser. What He has promised, He is able also to perform.

The words are still fresh and new. They can never grow old; for He who spoke them is the same "yesterday, today, and forever." They were spoken for us in these last days as truly as for the ages past. Christ meant us when he uttered them.

I. THE LEGACY.

"Peace I leave with you." This is the parting gift of one who was about to depart. He Himself was bidding farewell—but he was not going to take his peace away along with him. He brought it when he came ("peace on earth"); and He leaves it behind him as a heavenly relic. His presence had been the source of peace to them, and His absence was not to dry it up. That source would remain the same. Present or absent, far off or near, on earth or in heaven, He was still to be the fountain of their peace. The world would be a blank without Him no doubt; but he was leaving behind Him a peace which would cheer and gladden. It was not all that they had when He

was with them, nor was it all they were to have when He returned; but still it was much; enough to comfort, to bless, to shed light upon the darkness of their way. In the world there was to be tribulation, in Him peace. The peace of God was to rule in their hearts. They were to abide in peace, and peace in them!

II. THE GIFT.

"My peace I give you." This is evidently something in addition to the former clause. The peace is not merely something left—but positively given: "I give." It is not lent or sold—but given; it is Christ's own gift; free and unconditional; His peace is like Himself, a gift to us; unsolicited, unpurchased, unmerited. But the striking expression here is "my peace"; Christ's own peace; peace altogether peculiar; transcending in nature and in fullness all other peace. What then was Christ's peace?

(1.) It was the peace of a conscience on which there never rested the shadow of a sense of guilt.

It was pre-eminently "a good conscience"; a conscience void of offence. Where does our unrest come from? From a sense of guilt on our conscience. It is an evil conscience that alarms us. The least speck or shadow of guilt breaks our peace. Now in Jesus there was the perfection of a good conscience. Not a shadow ever rested there. It is a blessed thought that there was once here a man like ourselves, whose conscience was never touched with the slightest stain of guilt; who never had to regret one thought, or recall one word, or wish one action undone. What must have been the peace possessed by Him; profound, unutterable; even in the midst of a stormy world. It is into this profound peace of conscience that He would lead us. Of that very peace He would make us partakers. The result of our "receiving" Him, or "believing on his name," is to bring us into that same state of conscience and that same kind of peace which He who knew no sin, possessed. Our vessels are indeed small, and can contain little; His was large, and could contain much. But the kind or quality of that peace which fills them is the same. He has made peace by the blood of His cross; yes, He is our peace; and as soon as we come to know this and take Him as our peace, we are made partakers not merely of peace—but of that which he calls here "my peace."

(2.) It was the peace of one entirely obedient to the Father's will.

It was to do that will that He came; and His life was the doing of it. "I delight to do your will, O my God." "Not my will but yours be done." As in all obedience there is peace, so in obedience to such a will, from such a being as the Son, there must have been a peace passing all understanding; a peace altogether infinite; a peace proportioned to the entireness and perfection of the obedience. Such an obedience had never been rendered before; and such a peace had never been possessed, either on earth or heaven, by man or angel. It is into this peace that He leads us—peace perfect and profound; peace not springing from nor proportioned to our obedience—but to his; the peace of which his obedience to the Father is at once the foundation and the measure.

(3.) It was the peace of one whose peculiar composition of person made him partaker of peculiar peace.

He was "the Word made flesh"; Son of God and Son of Man; and as such He was a vessel of infinite dimensions; capable of containing a peace such as no one else could do. Into this vessel of infinite capacity all fullness of peace was poured by the Father; and out of this vessel, this peace is poured into us—not to the same extent—but still in proportion to our capacity. It is of the divine peace of the God-man that we are made partakers. What peace is there like this? As the grapes of Eshcol were of peculiar delicacy, and the cedars of Lebanon of peculiar beauty, and the gardens of Solomon of peculiar fertility and fragrance, so was this peace which filled the Christ of God peculiarly excellent; and of this peculiar peace He gives his saints the promise—"My peace I give you."

(4.) It was the peace of one whose peculiar relationship to the Father made him possessor of peculiar peace.

There is something in filial peace, the peace of a son, as resulting from the connection between his father and himself, and his own peculiar standing in the house, which cannot well be described. How much more is this true of the peace of Him who is the only begotten Son of God? His must have been peace as special as it was infinite—the peace poured into the bosom of the beloved Son by the Father

himself. This is not the peace of a servant, or a friend—but the peace of a Son—and such a son! This divine and filial peace, the peace of the only begotten of the Father, He gives to us as his free gift—"My peace I give you." And this becomes all the more true and more blessed when they to whom He gives the peace are themselves sons of God! The Father pours a special peace from his fatherly heart into the heart of his beloved Son; and that Son pours this special peace into the hearts of those who are partakers of his sonship—truly sons of God!

(5.) It was a peace that could never be destroyed.

The peace is like Himself, and like Him from whom He receives it—eternal and unchangeable—peace partaking of his character as the eternal One, the same yesterday, today, and forever. It is peace begun now—given even here—it is peace to be continued in the eternal kingdom; peace without end, or interruption, or change forever.

Such is Christ's gift to his own! It is precious, perfect, divine. It is like himself. It is a peace which passes all understanding. What a treasure for earth! And what a pledge of the fuller treasure in store for us when He comes again. For great as is the peace which He gives just now, it is nothing compared to the peace in reserve for us hereafter. He gives it to his own; and He bids all men draw near to become his own! Come unto me and I will give you rest, is his first message; and his second is like unto it—"My peace I give you."

III. THE CONTRAST.

"I do not give to you as the world gives." In all aspects there is a contrast between Christ and the world; with nothing of likeness or sympathy. But it is not of himself that He speaks here—but of his gifts and manner of giving. Christ's peace and the world's are opposites; so are his giving and the world's.

As to the **PEACE**—

(1.) Christ's peace is perfect.

The world's is partial and imperfect; no depth, no greatness about it. It is and has been a poor meager thing at its best.

(2.) Christ's peace reaches the conscience.

The world's does not. It soothes the conscience asleep—but that is all. It intoxicates—but gives no rest to the inner man. It is not the offspring of a purged or pacified conscience.

(3.) Christ's peace is satisfying.

The world's is unsatisfying. The peace which comes in any way, from any region of this evil world, cannot fill. It meets none of our spirit's cravings and longings. It does not feed our hunger or quench our thirst. It leaves us as empty as before. It speaks peace when there is none.

(4.) Christ's peace is steady.

The world's is wavering. The world itself is unstable, and so are all its gifts; especially that of peace. This is easily ruffled, easily broken, ever changing.

(5.) Christ's peace is holy.

The world's is unholy. Christ's peace is everlasting; the world's is soon ended. At the longest, the world's peace is but for a lifetime; but seldom does it last half as long; more generally, a day or an hour. Eternal peace is Christ's gift!

As to the **GIVING**—

(1.) Christ's giving is free.

None of the world's gifts are free. He gives like himself, and as He gave himself. The world bargains and sells.

(2.) Christ's giving is genuine.

The world's is a pretense. The world wishes us peace; this is its daily salutation; but all is hollow. Christ means what He says when He wishes us peace!

(3.) Christ's giving is ungrudging.

The world has no pleasure in giving; is not generous and loving. Christ gives as a King—in full-hearted love; He does not reprimand us.

(4.) Christ's giving is immediate.

The world keeps us waiting. Christ does not. His word is now!

(5.) Christ's giving is irrevocable.

The world often takes back what it gave. His peace is sure, He does not recall it; nor will he, forever. How vivid the contrast! Can any one hesitate in choosing? To reject the world's false peace and to take Christ's true peace, is of all things the most reasonable that can be proposed to man! Consider the contrast well, and act accordingly.

IV. THE CONSOLATION.

"Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." There will be many things to trouble and terrify in such a world; a world where all is hatred, enmity, and persecution. But against all this provision has been made; and that provision is the peace of Christ. No doubt, He gives other things also for days of trial—strength, faith, hope—but it is his peace that is the special antidote—the pre-eminent sustainer and comforter in evil times.

It is peace; and it is such a peace! It keeps the soul unmoved when the tempest is raging round. It makes us feel as if hidden in the hollow of Christ's hand; defended by his shield; embraced by his arm. It is light in darkness; it is a strong tower in the midst of assailing hosts. Let the world reproach or persecute; we have a peace within which more than meets all its reproaches and persecutions. Let Antichrist and Satan rage; the divine peace within keeps us immovable. Let bodily pain assail us; we are sustained by the peace of Christ. Let sorrow, grief, losses, surround us; we are kept calm and cheerful by the peace of Christ. Our hearts are not

troubled with anxiety or trial; nor are they afraid in the midst of persecution and abuse.

With Christ's peace within us, and Christ himself as our companion by our side, we go forth on our pilgrimage as people who are in possession of a heavenly charm which preserves us in patience and tranquility; which makes us invincible; no, victorious; more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

Lesson Twenty-Five

Christ in Heaven—the Church on Earth

"Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father. In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father." – John 16:25-28

These words seem to specifically apply to the state of things, both in heaven and on earth, during the present dispensation. Christ in and from heaven speaking to us plainly of the Father, as well as acting as the High Priest with Urim and Thummin, inquiring and interceding for His own. The Church on earth listening to these revelations of the Father, and asking in his name. In the Old Testament, Messiah (for He is the speaker) spoke in types; when He was here on earth he spoke in parables, or hidden words, figures; but since Pentecost He has spoken "plainly," without a veil or figure. It is this plain revelation of the Father that we have in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the Epistles. During this dispensation, too, we have the asking in Christ's name; we have Christ's intercession for us; we have the Father's special love; and we have the special reasons for that special love. Such is a sketch of the passage.

I. CHRIST IN HEAVEN.

He was on earth; but he has left, and is gone to the Father. It was expedient for us that he should go away, that he might send the Comforter, as if both He and the Spirit could not be spared from heaven at once. But it is not of this mission of the Comforter that he speaks here. He has gone to heaven.

(1.) As the revealer of the Father.

He came to do this; He did this while here; but chiefly in parables—figures, dark sayings. These were a sort of veil over what he said regarding the Father, even in his last discourses. But when He went up to heaven all that dimness was gone. From the day of Pentecost

there was the plain and full revelation of the Father. The Spirit whom He sent down on his apostles, enabling them to preach and to write, spoke plainly. The Epistles contain this plain revelation of the Father. There may be in them something hard to be understood—but still they are the plainest and fullest revelations of God that man has had. It is this unfolding of God and his ways and thoughts that the world so desperately needed and needs still. Acquaintanceship with God is the removal of the world's darkness, and the healing of all its wounds. We look upwards to the heaven of heavens where Jesus is; we listen to His voice, and in what He speaks we have the plain discovery of the Father.

(2.) As the medium of communication between us and the Father.

He is in heaven as Advocate, Intercessor, High Priest. As such He carries on the communion between us and God. Through Him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father. *"I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God."*; that is, "I need not say that I will act as your High Priest, and yet this is not because the Father requires to be persuaded to love you, for He loves you already." Christ, then, is the communicator between us and God. Whatever we need, let us take it to Him; if any man lacks wisdom, let him ask. Jesus is our High Priest. Let us deal with him.

II. THE CHURCH ON EARTH.

Jesus leaves his saints here, yet He keeps up constant communion with them. Heaven and earth are brought together; as if all were nearness and not distance. In this passage we have the Church on earth.

(1.) Receiving Christ's revelations of the Father.

He speaks, and the church listens. His lessons are all of the Father; and the church learns from His lips more and more each day of the Father's character, and ways, and mind, and works. As a willing listener to what Jesus speaks of the Father, she goes upon her way here, and does the Father's work. She learns each day more fully the meaning of the marvelous words, "God is love; and he who dwells in

love dwells in God, and God in him." It is this revelation of the Father that we preach as glad tidings of great joy. This fills our hearts and imparts the unearthly peace, the unworldly joy, which, as believing people, we possess.

(2.) Praying in Christ's name.

In a sense that name had been known from the beginning. The seed of the woman, with the bruised heel, was known as he through whom all communications were made between the sinner and God. On the credit of His name prayer got its answer all along. Not one petition was accepted, except in virtue of that name. But still the name was distantly known; and besides it was not known as the name of Jesus of Nazareth. From now on round that name all prayer was to gather. In that name it was to be presented. That name was to bear it aloft. That name was to secure its success. That name was, by its own omnipotence, to make everyone connected with it omnipotent too. Christ gives us this name to make use of in all our dealings with God. We need nothing else. This will secure the abundant answer. Never let us go to God without that name; and going with it, let us be confident; trusting, not distrusting; believing, not doubting. Let the virtue, the power, the efficacy of that name be ever realized. Let us not dishonor it by distrust. He who goes to God without it, dishonors it. He who professes to go with it, yet doubts whether it will secure an answer for his prayers, no less dishonors it. Let the thought of that name remove all doubt on our part. That name removes all ground for refusal on the part of God. It enables him to give full vent to its infinite liberality and love.

(3.) Enjoying the Father's love.

"The Father himself loves you." This is no doubtful thing; but as sure as it is blessed. It is this love that is the sunshine of life. The Father's love! Yes; it is written, "That the love with which you have loved me may be in them." He loves them as lovers of his Son. He loves them as believers in the mission of that Son to earth. What love is there like this? And what can brighten or sweeten life like this?

(4.) Loving the Son.

"You have loved me." The Church is the lover of Christ. In an unloving world she loves Him whom the Father loves. This marks her out from all around. To her He is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. "My beloved" is the name she gives Him. What He desires is love, our love. What He needs is possession of our hearts. The question that He asks is "Do you love me?"

(5.) Believing that He came out from God.

This is the first thing, though here it comes last. The Father presents him to us as His beloved Son; sent from God, to do the work of God. The first way in which we honor Him is by receiving Him as the Son, the Sent of the Father. Our recognition of Him as such brings us into the circle of discipleship. Believing the Father's testimony to the Son, we ourselves become sons, and as such receive the fullness of the Father's love.

What then do you think of Christ? Do you believe that He is the Son of God; that He came out from God, and has gone back to God; not only as the Father's servant to do the Father's will—but in love to us, and as the messenger of the Father's love.

Lesson Twenty-Six

Tribulation, Peace, and Victory

“These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” – John 16:33 (ASV).

Here are four special points—the peace, the tribulation, the victory, the cheer. It is Christ himself who is the speaker of these words. He speaks them to us. Let us listen.

I. THE PEACE.

Peace is the great Bible subject; the theme of God's message to men. Peace on earth; peace with God; the peace of conscious reconciliation. But it is not so much "peace with God" that is here referred to, as "the peace of God"; not the peace obtained by receiving the embassy of peace, the reconciliation—but the peace of the reconciled soul. Into this region of peace reconciliation is the entrance. Here no wrath can reach us, no storm can ruffle us; we are "kept in perfect peace"; "the peace of God rules in our hearts," and is perpetual sunshine, like an island of bright lushness in the midst of a stormy sea. It is peace in Christ; not out of Him, nor apart from Him—but in Him. It flows out of Him to us; or rather we are in Him, and so we get that peace. We get it by means of his words; *“These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace.”* His words are the words of peace. The soul that listens to these words drinks in the peace, or, we may say, breathes the air of peace. Look at his words, "Let not your heart be troubled"; "In my Father's house are many mansions;" "The Father coming in and abiding;" the love of the Father; the little while; the coming joy. Yes, every word is loaded with peace; his own peace; the Father's peace; the Spirit's peace; the peace of heaven; peace even here on an earth, where all is trouble and disquiet.

II. THE TRIBULATION.

Though not of the world, we are still in it. We are partakers of its sorrows, though not of its sins. And besides, the men of the world hate us and trouble us, as they hated and troubled our Master. So that we have tribulation both in and from the world. The prince and god of this world is

against us, and attacks us on every side, as the old serpent, the tempter, the roaring lion, the ruler of the darkness of this world. Our separation from it, and non-conformity to it, make it the more hostile. It will not let us alone. It is a waste howling wilderness; a land of storms, and barrenness, and enemies, and thorns, and briars. The law of the Church's present state is "tribulation"; "Through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom."

There is also the weakness of this "vile body"—weariness, displeasure, disappointment, bereavement, breaking of ties, farewells and partings, bodily diseases, pain, affliction, poverty, loss, disaster, distressed circumstances, persecutions, coldness, hatred, the sneer and taunt—of these things the world is full. Its atmosphere is impregnated with the evil, and sadness, and gloom. So has it been from the beginning; we see it in Abel, Noah, Joseph, Moses, David, Jeremiah, and all the saints. It is the Christian's portion here. It was the portion of our Savior. He was a man of sorrows. And all this not because of inconsistency—but consistency; the more we are unlike the world, the more it hates us; the more we are like the Lord, the more will the world persecute us. The seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent cannot agree or love. Therefore we must come out from it; stand aloof, whatever may be the consequences. And this non-conformity—this quarrel between us and the world—only makes us long more for the day of the great advent. Tribulation makes us long for the coming; death makes us long for resurrection; weariness makes us long for rest; partings make us long for meetings. So we look for, and make haste unto, the coming of the day of God, the ending of the sorrow, the beginning of the fullness of joy.

III. THE VICTORY.

"I have overcome the world." It is a powerful world—but not all-powerful. It has been fought with and overcome. One greater than it, or than its prince, has come and vanquished it. The world did its utmost in this battle—but the Son of God prevailed. The seed of the woman bruised the serpent's head. Noah condemned the world—but Christ overcame it. It has now no longer any power left to it but what He permits. He overcame it both by weakness and by strength; He slew death by dying; He conquered Satan, the god of this world, by allowing Satan to conquer Him. He did it alone. None could help Him in such a battle. Yet the victory was complete, final, and irreversible. He is the conqueror; and, as the conqueror, led captivity captive. When He comes again, the victory will be manifested; now we only

know it by faith. God has proclaimed the victory of his Son both in heaven and earth—but the world does not believe it. Yet the victory was great and glorious. It was a victory which decided the long battle between heaven and hell; between God and Satan; between the Church and the spiritual weakness in high places.

IV. THE CHEER.

Be of good cheer or courage. Do not be afraid of the world, or its prince, or its tribulations.

(1.) It is a conquered world.

Not in its full strength or flushed with victory—but routed, defeated. Even at its strongest it had but creature strength, and "Who are you that you should be afraid of a man that shall die?" It is now creature-weakness; a broken world. Be of good cheer!

(2.) It is conquered for you.

The victor fought your fight and won your victory. The world is his foe and yours; as both He fought and won; He was a leader and commander to the people, the Captain of your salvation. It was you He had in view when He was fighting. He will make you more than conqueror. Be of good cheer.

(3.) It is conquered by Christ.

Conquered by your Savior, your friend. The conqueror is almighty, and his victory has been acknowledged by the Father. It was Jesus who fought and won. Be of good cheer.

Be cheerful in days of darkness. You still have a battle which you must fight cheerfully and hopefully. Fight, and do not yield. Love not the world—but contend against it. Be faithful to death; the promise is to him that overcomes.

Lesson Twenty-Seven

The Declaration of the Father's Name

"I made known unto them thy name, and will make it known; that the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them." – John 17:26 (ASV)

I. THE NAME.

It is the Father's name; the name of Godhead. The name of a thing expresses its qualities and characteristics. The name of a person of old did the same. So the name of God is that which reveals the mind, and heart, and character of God. The name of God is manifold, bringing out various aspects of Godhead. This name may be read on the works of God; this world He created; sun, moon, and stars. But the word contains the name more fully: "You have magnified your word above all your name." But there are portions of the word in which the name is summed up, as in Exodus 34:6: "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious." And this especially was that which the Son of God came to declare. That name of grace shone out legibly and brightly in Him. He came in the Father's name, to reveal that name; to embody it in His person, so that everyone who saw or heard Him, might see and hear the name. "God is love"; "God rich in mercy"; "God so loved the world." These are fragments, or letters, or syllables of the great name.

II. THE DECLARER OF IT.

Man had often tried to utter the name of God—but had failed. He could not comprehend it, and he could not utter it, nor make it known. There was but stammering and distortion. Only He could utter it who came from the Father, and who knew Him, as only the Son could do. He came to earth as the revealer of the Father, and the Father's name. He knew that name well; and when He said, "Abba, Father," and "righteous Father," and "holy Father," and "our Father," He spoke as one who knew it; as one who was seeking to make others know it, and so to be partakers of His confidence and joy. But how, and when, and where did He declare it? In every way, at every time, and in every place during his sojourn here. As every star, and leaf, and flower, and mountain, and stream are, in their province, declarers

of the name of God, so (only much more) were each look, and word, and deed, and step of the Lord Jesus declarers of the Father's name. He declared it:

(1.) By His birth.

Bethlehem was the first place made to echo with the Father's name. The lowly birth, the stable, the manger, all said, "God is love."

(2.) By his private life.

His thirty years at Nazareth were all, though in ways unknown to us, declarers of the Father's names. These unrecorded years were not wholly silent nor inarticulate. They said, "God is love."

(3.) His words.

They are few in comparison with what might have been received. Yet they are enough to declare the name most fully. Each word He spoke is a revelation of the Father. It tells us something of the mind and heart of God, which otherwise we could not have known. It says to us, "God is love."

(4.) His deeds.

His life was one of miracles; and all of these illustrative of the Father's character; all of them utterances of the Father's name. Each of them spoke out articulately, and said, "God is love."

(5.) His death and resurrection.

His cross and grave, each of them in its own way, declared the Father's name." He who came to die, and to rise, did so because "God so loved the world." How clearly, how loudly, how fully, did the death and resurrection of the Son of God proclaim, "God is love."

In all these ways He was the declarer of the Father's name; the revealer of His character; the embodiment, as well as the proclamation of His grace. And He not only says, "I made known," but "(I) will make it known"; as if all the future as well as all the past were to be one glorious declaration of the divine name. That declaration is not done. It is now going on in heaven. It

will go on, on earth again when He returns to make all things new. Then God's name shall not only be revealed—but "hallowed"; and on the forehead of the redeemed is to be written in the ages to come, "their Father's name." Throughout the ages of the eternal kingdom, that name shall continue to be declared, on earth and in heaven. That name is what the creature needs to know; expressly what man needs to know. In it are wrapped up the blessedness, the glory of the universe.

III. THE END AND OBJECT OF THIS DECLARATION.

"That the love wherewith thou lovedst me may be in them, and I in them." The declaration of the Father's name is for our sakes, that we through the knowledge of that name might have the fullness of the Father's love poured into us, and that Christ Himself might make his abode with us. It is not directly of the love of the Father to us that Christ here speaks—but the love of the Father to Himself, "the love wherewith thou lovedst me." Elsewhere He speaks of this love as one with, or commensurate with, His own to us: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you." But here it is of the Father's love to the Son as poured into us through the knowledge of the divine name as given us by Christ, that He is speaking to us, so that the result of Christ's revelation of the Father's name, or rather of our believing that revelation, would be twofold.

(1.) The Father's love to the Son would come in to us.

What a love! In His case it was all merited; in ours, unmerited; but still, true and boundless. It comes in and dwells in us. It is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit; and so we are filled with all the fullness of God.

(2.) Christ Himself would come in to us.

He would abide with us and fill us. Through the knowledge which He gives us of the Father's name, He himself comes in to us! How simple, how immediate, and how free. Believing Christ's revelation of the Father's name, we get all Christ Himself.

Lesson Twenty-Eight

Ritualism and the Cross

"Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover." – John 18:28

These rulers of the Jews and the multitude that followed them, were thorough "Ritualists." It was their Ritualism which urged them on to crucify the Son of God. For Christ and Ritualism are opposed to each other as light is to darkness. The true cross in which Paul gloried, and the cross in which modern ceremonialists glory, have no resemblance to each other. The cross and the crucifix cannot agree. Either ritualism will banish Christ, or Christ will banish ritualism. They cannot possibly co-exist.

It is the ritualism of these Jews—Pharisees, and Scribes, and Priests—which comes out here. It was this which kept them out of Pilate's hall—for the touch of a Gentile, or anything belonging to a Gentile, would pollute them. They could not, in that case, eat the Passover. And the Passover was simply to them a rite by which they thought to recommend themselves to God and pacify their own consciences. It was their God, their Messiah, their Savior, their religion.

Ritualism, or externalism, or traditionalism—are all different forms of self-righteousness; man's self-invented ways of pleasing or appeasing God, or paying for admittance into heaven. These forms of self-righteousness are a human apparatus for performing a certain thing called worship, or procuring a thing called pardon. They are the means by which the performer of them hopes to win God's favor—perhaps, also, man's praise—most certainly, his own esteem.

If there could be a righteousness or merit from any kind of human performances, it would have been under the Old Testament, for then all the ceremonies were divine. Man did not originate or invent them. They were all ordained by God. Awful as was the mistake of the Jew in making a savior or a righteousness of these, it was not half so awful or so unnatural as making a Savior or a righteousness out of the performance of certain

rites called Christian, invented wholly by man, without God's command—no, in defiance of it. And every act, or performance, or ceremony, which honors self, exalts self, gives prominence to self—is an accursed thing; an abomination in the sight of God, however religious, or sacred, or solemn, or devout, it may seem to man.

It is to self-righteousness in some form or other that man is always tending; under Christianity no less than under Judaism. On the one hand, we see men trying to believe that human nature is not so very bad after all and on the other, men professing to believe that it is bad, trying to make up for this badness, or to cover it over, by works, and devotions, and ceremonies. All this is pure self-righteousness. "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away." Isaiah 64:6

The touch-stone of this ritualism, or religionism, or self-righteousness—is the true cross of Christ. Let us look at it in this light; especially as exhibited in the narrative under examination; for here it is that, for the first time, self-righteousness comes in direct contact with the cross.

I. THE RELIGION OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS.

In the case of these Jews it was keeping the Passover; observing a feast. That was religion! It was all the religion they had; it was there all for acceptance with God; there all for eternity. Their answer to the Judge at the judgment seat would be, "I kept your Passovers." As if there were any religion in eating and drinking! The religion of self-righteousness in our day is like this—works, feelings, music, rites, festivals, fasts, gestures, postures, garments—that is religion! It is something which gratifies self; which pleases the natural man; which makes a man think well of himself; which gives a man something to do or to feel in order to earn pardon and merit heaven.

II. THE SCRUPLES OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS.

These Jews would not enter a Gentile hall. The touch of its floor or walls would be pollution. Religion and irreligion were to them something outward; something with which the body, not the soul, had to do. After touching these, or breathing such air, they would themselves be defiled. Their scruples all turned on their own self-esteem. Pride, religious pride, was at the root. They were thoroughly blind to all that constituted real pollution,

and saw only the false. They were scrupulous about entering a Gentile hall, yet they were seeking to slay a righteous man, no, to crucify the Lord of glory. What was the value of such principles? What was their meaning? These men could swallow the camel while they were straining out a gnat. They could murder the innocent; yet they were too holy to set their foot on a Gentile floor! Such is the way in which self-righteousness acts itself out! Such is the pride of ecclesiastical standing!

III. THE DEEDS OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS.

These were many. Some looked very religious—fasting, praying, almsgiving, Others not so. In the present case, the great deed of self-righteousness is the crucifying of the Lord of glory. That cross was the monument of self-righteousness. It was this that cried, *Away with him! crucify him! not this man but Barabbas!* So with modern self-righteousness in every form; especially in the form of ritualism and formalism. It is ever against Christ that self-righteousness shows its hatred, and aims its strokes. Ritualism is man's expression of dislike to Christ. It is the modern way of crucifying Christ afresh, and putting Him to an open shame.

IV. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THIS DEED AND THE RELIGION.

Christ and self-righteousness cannot be on terms of friendship, for Christ, in his grace and finished work and free salvation, is wholly antagonistic to all forms of self righteous. The Jews felt that He was crossing their path, that He was hacking down their temple, that He was utterly making void all their religion; and so they hated Him; hence they crucified Him. It was self-righteous religion which crucified the Son of God.

All rites and ceremonies, whether old or new, are man's ways of getting rid of Christ. They get rid of real religion by means of that which looks like religion—but which is not religion at all. What can all these things do? Can they save? Can postures save? Can dresses save? Can candles, lighted or unlighted, save? Can music save? Can architecture save? Can cathedrals save? No, can they even point the way to Jesus? Do they not lead away from Him? Do they not make void the cross, and trample on the blood? "He saved us—not by works of righteousness that we had done, but according to His mercy, through the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit." Titus 3:5

Lesson Twenty-Nine

The Greater Sin

Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." – John 19:11

These words are directed against the Jews, though spoken to Pilate. They are a declaration of the great guilt of the Jewish nation and its rulers, in asking Pilate to exercise his God-given authority against the Son of God. Pilate has not yet committed the sin of condemning Christ; he was urged to it; he hesitated; he shrunk from it; and our Lord here utters the words of warning, to deter him from the consummation of his great crime. "Not the Roman emperor; but my Father; not the people—but my Father, gave you this power, and set you in that place where you have now to judge me, His Son; and these, His enemies and mine, are now asking you to exercise this power given you from above against me, the Son of God, who came from above." As when speaking to Simon (Luke 7:44) he turned to the woman, so here, when speaking to Pilate, he turned to the Jews.

The sin here spoken of is not so much Pilate's as Israel's. He did what he did "ignorantly and in unbelief"; they knew, he did not know; he thought he was only exercising his lawful power in the usual way, as a Roman governor. Israel knew the Scriptures concerning Messiah; Pilate did not; and the "greater sin" was committed by men who, with the Scriptures in their hand, called on him who did not have these Scriptures to condemn their own Messiah.

This power of Pilate was acknowledged by the Jews, by Judas, by Annas, by Caiaphas. They appealed to him as one who had the power to "crucify" and to "release." Hence their sin, their special sin; their "greater sin"—greater than in any ordinary case, greater than that of Pilate. It was "greater sin," because they knew what they did; and because they were making use of the God-given power of another, as well as taking advantage of his ignorance, to perpetrate a crime, which, in its lowest aspect, was the condemnation of the innocent, in its highest, the condemnation of their own Messiah, the Son of the living God.

I. PILATE'S POWER WAS "FROM ABOVE."

(1.) As governor.

There is no power but of God, the powers that be are ordained of God; the source of earthly power is heavenly; not in man or from man—but from the King of kings, the Prince of the kings of the earth. The recognition of this lies at the root of all true politics. Earthly crowns and thrones and scepters are thus linked with that one heavenly crown and throne and scepter. Kings and magistrates are, by reason of their office, responsible to God. Not personally, but officially, as rulers, they are directly responsible. It is just because of their office that they are so peculiarly accountable, and so solemnly bound to do everything to the glory of God. It is just because of their office, and not merely as other men, that they are bound to consecrate everything which their office gives them power over to the service of Him from whom they have received their power.

(2.) As a Gentile governor.

The Jews had, for their sins, been given over to Gentile dominion, until the times of the Gentiles should be fulfilled. So that in a double sense Pilate's power was not his own, nor from Rome, nor from the people. In a double sense it came from God, and was therefore to be specially used for God. He might not know all this; but Israel knew it; for their prophets, Daniel especially, had taught them this; and therefore they had the "greater sin." That God's purpose embraced something more than this, and had reference to the crucifixion of Messiah, is true; but that the appeal here made by our Lord to Pilate, though having special reference to Himself, is founded on a broader and more general truth seems evident.

A.) Even a bad man's power is from God.

Our Lord affirms this of Pilate; and of Pilate when using that power for the perpetration of the greatest crime ever committed in our world. Let no one therefore point to the crimes of kings, or the sins of magistrates, and say, Can the power of these men be given them from above? Look at Pilate. Listen to our Lord's words; or hear Paul when, in the days of Nero, he said (referring to the words of our Lord), "Let every man be subject

to the higher powers" (authorities holding from above) and when he proclaims civil government to be "the ordinance of God"; more—when he calls the monarch or magistrate "the minister of God."

B.) His using his God-given power for a bad purpose is allowed of God.

He is free to act; but he is responsible to God for his actions. God overrules his wickedness, and employs him as His instrument for carrying out his purposes. He ought to use his power for a good purpose; not for condemning the Son of God—but for honoring Him; and when he abuses his authority, he is doubly guilty; though that guilt is made use of by God for the development of His own purposes, as in the death of His own Son at the hands of Pilate. That the power which Pilate used was conferred by God only, made his act, as well as that of the Jews, the more criminal. What a reckoning is at hand with the kings of earth, for the abuse of their power! (See Psalm 82)

C.) God makes him His instrument.

He is free. He might use his power for a good purpose; yet even when he uses it for a bad one, he is overruled of God. It is God's "determinate counsel" that comes out here (Acts 2:23). Like Pharaoh working out Israel's deliverance, so is Pilate here working out the Church's deliverance, according to the purpose of God.

II. THE FOLLOWING TRUTHS COME OUT HERE:

(1.) The thing which Pilate was preparing to do would have been sin in any circumstances.

Even if his power was not given from above. It was the condemnation of an innocent man. It was might trampling on right.

(2.) It was greater sin, because the power was from above.

It was abusing, for unrighteousness, the power received from the God of righteousness.

(3.) It was still greater sin to use this God-given power to crucify the Son of God.

The moment man gets into power, he uses it against God and against his Christ.

(4.) It was yet greater sin in Israel to deliver up their own Messiah to be crucified by him who had this power.

It was as much as calling on God to crucify his own Son. It was daring sin, committed with their eyes open. Pilate's sin was great; Israel's was greater far. Pilate, beware of your sin, for it is great; Israel, beware of your sin, for it is far greater. Thus He warns both at once; and bids them beware of the sin of crucifying the Lord of glory.

Lesson Thirty

The View at Calvary

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. – John 19:25-27

Have you ever wondered how those who stood at Calvary and watched Jesus die felt about what they saw? Today we can sing so casually, "I will cherish the old rugged cross," or, "Beneath the cross of Jesus, I fain would take my stand." Without blinking an eye, we can sing, "Jesus keep me near the cross...Bring its scenes before me." Could those who gathered around Calvary have sung, "Bring its scenes before me"? I suspect that as they saw what happened at that place of horror, they might have said, "Take these scenes away from me. I never want to think of them again."

We, too, must make a pilgrimage to Calvary. If we are going to see what they saw, then we are going to have to look, even though the scenes are not pleasant. We must look upon the view at Calvary. Only there can we grasp certain essential truths. Only there can the most important facts of history be presented to us in a dramatic and unforgettable way.

I. WE SEE CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS DESPISED.

(1.) Christ's righteousness was despised by the Jews and their leaders.

They had been waiting for the Holy One of God; but when they beheld His holiness; they despised it. How sad that many Jews were unable to accept the very one they had been waiting and praying for.

(2.) Christ's righteousness was despised by the Romans.

They were not involved in the religious debate over Jesus; yet they found cause to mock Him. Was there something in Jesus' attitude that the callous Romans could not understand? These Romans

admired power; and perhaps they could not appreciate this one who stood as a sheep stands dumb before the shearers.

(3.) Christ's righteousness was even despised by one of His own disciples.

Judas, who was at one time a trusted confidant, saw Christ as one to be bartered. How ironic that the one most worthy of our highest praise was subjected to our lowest humiliation.

We should not be surprised that Christ was despised. Isaiah prophesied 700 years before Christ that this would happen. (Isaiah 53:3) "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not."

II. WE SEE CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS DISPLAYED.

Here in the most trying time of His life we see His holiness shine through. Moments of trial tend to accent the best and worst in a person. In Christ, we see His goodness so clearly that we stand in awe. There is only goodness in Him.

(1.) His righteousness was displayed in His attitude toward His enemies.

Would anyone have blamed Jesus for some few sarcastic words to those who conspired to put Him to death? Yet, Jesus showed only compassion for His enemies and asked the Father for their forgiveness.

(2.) His righteousness was displayed in His attitude toward His friends.

When we are in a time of great need, we hope our friends will support us. At Calvary, we do not see Jesus' friends supporting Him – we see Jesus supporting His friends. And if we look closely enough – we see that as His own body weighed heavily on that cross – He was supporting us. (Heb 4:15) "For we do not have a high priest who is

unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin."

(3.) His righteousness was displayed in His attitude toward suffering.

Jesus accepts suffering. He realizes that no one can escape it. Jesus did not come to the cross cheerfully. If He had, we would have wondered about His sanity. No one enjoys suffering, not even the Lord. He did, however, accept suffering. He faced it in a way that inspires us all.

(4.) His righteousness was displayed in His attitude toward death.

Jesus wanted to avoid Calvary, but it wasn't because He was afraid to die. He might have been reluctant to face the pain of death. He might have wanted to live longer. But He wasn't afraid to die. Listen to His final words: "Father, into your hands I commit My Spirit." What a beautiful way to look at death. When we die we are placing ourselves in the hands of the Father. We can look at Calvary and see the actions of Christ. Surely, we are led to say, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

III. WE SEE CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS DECLARED.

(1.) Christ's righteousness was declared by Pilate.

He said, "I find no fault in Him." Though he did not, as far as we know, believe in Jesus, Pilate knew a good person when he saw one. Though he did not have the courage to set Christ free, he could not bear to judge this Holy One. In John 19 we read that Pilate had a placard placed above Jesus' head and written on it in three different languages was the message, "Jesus of Nazareth: the King of the Jews". The Jews protested to Pilate, John 19:21 "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.", but Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

(2.) Christ's righteousness was declared by the centurion.

He said, "Surely this was a righteous man." Admittedly, his faith was partial and incomplete; but he was strongly touched by the man on the cross.

(3.) Nature even declared Christ's righteousness.

When Jesus died, all of God's fury was set loose upon Calvary. From a harmony of the gospel accounts we learn that there was a great earthquake; rocks were split in two; the sun stopped shining; the tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people were raised to life. It was as if God's anger could be held back no more. The temple veil was torn in two. Surely a nagging thought crept into many minds: "What have we done?"

(4.) Three days later came the ultimate declaration of Christ's righteousness.

The Father raised Him from the dead. This, the most dramatic and startling event in history, was done so that God could say once again, "This is My beloved Son." Only after the resurrection did the meaning of the cross become clear. This Jesus and His execution might have faded from memory without the resurrection. After He had risen, they could look back at the Cross and comprehend it.

So the disciples took this message with them. They declared to the world what they had seen. Down through the centuries the message of Jesus, who conquered sin and death, has been passed on.

Lesson Thirty-One

Christ's Work in Heaven—and Ours on Earth

Jesus saith to her, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God." – John 20:17 (ASV)

This passage is very generally taken to mean, "Do not so cling to me, you will have other opportunities of meeting me, for I will not be going to my Father for some time yet." But (1) it is doubtful whether "touch" can mean this; (2) this meaning does not line up with the reason, which is "I have not yet gone"; (3) the treatment of Thomas, who was allowed to touch, is at variance with this.

Looking into the words, we shall discover a truer sense. The command is, "touch me not"; the reason is, "I am not yet ascended," etc. Very little had passed between the Lord and Mary. He had said, "Mary"; she had replied, "Rabboni," accompanying the word with some significant look and gesture, which the Lord quite understood. To this look and gesture, or rather to the thought which they indicated, our Lord replies. For it was his custom to direct his answers to the thoughts more than to the words of his disciples; Luke 9:47, "Jesus perceiving the thought of their heart."

Christ's words, then, are directed to Mary's thought. She had sprung forward to embrace Him, under the impression that all He had spoken of before his death was now done; that He had been to the Father, and that He has now come again to receive his own to Himself. "Now all is fulfilled," she thought; "He has returned from the Father; He is going to take us to his kingdom; we shall be with Him forever." No, not yet, is Christ's answer; you speak and act as if all were done. Not so. I have more work to do, and you have more work to do; we must separate again; I to do my work, you to do yours.

There is a remarkable difference between Mary's case and that of Thomas. She believed too much; he too little. She was all faith—faith too hasty in its conclusions; he was all unbelief—unbelief refusing to believe even that this was his Master. Her too eager faith is corrected by the Touch me not—but Go, etc.; his unbelief is removed by the "Reach here your hand," etc. Each

is treated with marvelous wisdom, and gentleness, and love. How unlike man's way of dealing! We think He would have said to faith, *Touch me*; to unbelief, *Touch me not*. But the skill of the divine physician is as conspicuous in his treatment of the two cases as is his love.

The mistake which is here corrected by the Lord, is a very natural one, and of a very blessed kind. It is simply that of too great eagerness; ante-dating the joy of the kingdom, of the marriage-feast; saying too soon, "the winter is past, the rain is over and gone," etc. It is a mistake not so common with us as with the early Christians, who, like Mary, seemed to be every moment counting on entering into the joy of the Lord. The substance, then, of the Lord's exhortation is, "be calm and patient; he who believes does not make haste; I have work to do, which must be done before we sit down together in my Father's house; and you the same. Let us consider these two things then—Christ's work, our work.

I. CHRIST'S WORK.

He has gone to the Father; He is now at his right hand; and when that work is done we shall be admitted to touch Him; admitted to his joy; to drink the new wine with Him in his kingdom. What, then, is the work He has gone to do? He has gone.

(1.) To get the Spirit for us.

Not until He was glorified was the Spirit given in its fullness. Now He has received for us the promise of the Father—gifts for men. He is now the possessor and dispenser of the Holy Spirit.

(2.) To intercede for us.

His work of intercession is now going on in heaven; He ever lives to intercede for us; He is our advocate with the Father; our forerunner, appearing in the presence of God for us.

(3.) To prepare a place for us.

In his Father's house are many mansions; more than enough for the great multitude that no man can number. In these He has gone to prepare a place for us. What that preparation is we do not know; how long it may take we do not know. But it is going on just now and when

it is done He will come again and receive us to Himself, that where He is there we may be also.

(4.) To give repentance and forgiveness.

For this particularly He is exalted. This work He has been carrying on since Pentecost, when the first installment was exhibited. He is doing it daily still.

So, then, He cautions us—be calm, be patient, haste not, fret not; I have gone to do my work. It must be done, and then no more delay.

II. OUR WORK.

Touch me not, said the Lord—but go—go and tell. Mary hastened, and did what her Lord commanded. She had something else to do more important than touching or enjoying. She had work. So have we.

(1.) Work for ourselves.

It is work expressed in such exhortations as these: follow me, take up your cross, deny self, work while it is day, let your light shine, grow in grace, pray without ceasing.

(2.) Work for the church.

We are members of one body, helping each other, bearing each other's burdens, comforting each other, strengthening each other's hands, binding up each other's wounds, supplying each other's needs.

(3.) Work for the world.

We are called out of the world, not to take no interest in it—but to pity and pray for it. Let our eye be on dying men; seeking to save them, pulling them out of the fire, reproofing, warning, inviting, beseeching. We have much of this work to do, and little time to do it in.

Christ's work in heaven and ours on earth will soon be done. Then it will no longer be, *Touch me not*; but, *Come you blessed*. We shall sit down under his shadow; He shall say, Come with me from Lebanon; open to me my

sister, my love; and it shall be said, Who is this that comes up from the wilderness leaning on her beloved; and we shall say, Let Him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth. Then shall we touch Him without rebuke, sitting down with Him at the marriage supper, and shall ever be forever with the Lord.

Lesson Thirty-Two

The Tender Love of the Risen Christ

He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. – John 21:5

It was a risen Christ who asked this question; consequently He is shown to be the same Savior still. The cross and grave have not quenched His love; nor has resurrection made Him forget them, or raised Him above sympathy with them.

The question pertained to the needs of the body. His resurrection-body was still in sympathy with their body. He felt their pain, and want, and cold, and hunger, just as He did before. The higher He rose, the deeper and more perfect were His sympathies. He could hunger no more, neither thirst any more, nor be weary more; yet all this but made Him the more keenly alive to such sufferings and hardships in His brethren.

The question which He asked is one which He did not need to ask; He could have answered it Himself; He knew they had no food—that all night they had toiled—but caught nothing. Yet He wishes to speak to them as a man—as a friend interested in their welfare. That question is His method of approaching them; His morning greeting; the first link between them; the going out of His heart to call out theirs. He awakens their confidence, as a stranger, an unknown friend; and then, before they are aware, the stranger is no more, and Jesus, their Master, is revealed. Blessed surprise! Such as that with Mary at the tomb; such as that with the disciples on the Emmaus road; as if He delighted in these surprises of love. Jesus is man all over, in everything but sin—both before and after his resurrection.

The question here indicates such things as these—watchfulness, pity, bounty; and though these were exhibited in connection with bodily need, no less are they found in Him, in connection with the soul and its deeper, more eternal needs, and in connection with the church, His body, and her infinite needs. Let us note then,

I. THE WATCHFULNESS OF THE RISEN CHRIST.

He looks down on His flock, and marks each sheep and lamb with more than a shepherd's eye. The glory, the blessedness, the abundance with which He is surrounded, do not make Him unwatchful. Amid His own plenty, He remembers the poverty, and hunger, and cold, and nakedness of His scattered flock below. He watches each one. The lack of one meal for the body was observed by Him, that morning in Galilee; we may be sure that He marks the lack of sustenance, whether for soul or body, in the least of his members. Poor saint, you never lacked a meal, a crust—but Jesus noticed it, and asked the question, on purpose to supply your need, "My child, have you any food?" You never lacked even one spiritual meal, at any time—but He put the same question. He watches the hunger and thirst of His church on earth, and is unceasingly putting the question to it—to each congregation—to each saint: Children, have you any food? Nothing escapes his vigilant eye. "I know your poverty," He says; I know your hunger, your thirst, your weariness, your weakness, your sighs and tears.

II. THE PITY OF THE RISEN CHRIST.

"I have compassion on the multitudes," He once said, "because they have continued with me three days, and have nothing to eat." Such was His pity before His resurrection. Our text shows us His pity after it. And we are sure that the throne has not lessened that pity. He pities His church's hunger and leanness; each saint's hunger and leanness. It is in profoundest pity that he asks the question of each of us, Children, have you any food? Surrounded by the abundance in His Father's house above, he pities us in this wilderness, this land of famine; where need compasses us about. Oh. let us lean the compassion of the risen and ascended Christ. Let us trust in Him in every hour of want. Never did an earthly father pity a starving child as He pities us.

III. THE BOUNTY OF THE RISEN CHRIST.

His is no empty pity. He does not merely say, Be warmed and filled. He at once opens his treasure-house, and supplies us, as Joseph his brethren. His stores are boundless. He has bread enough and to spare. He has no pleasure in our hunger. He delights to pour out His plenty and to provide channels for its flowing down to us—as in the case of His disciples, when He filled their nets, and kindled the fire; and prepared the meal with His own hands. He opens his hands, and supplies every want. He replenishes the church's basket and store. He fills the plates of his widowed church

here in the day of famine. And this is His voice to her now—His voice in every age, His voice in these last days: "Children, have you any food?" Perhaps we have to answer, No. There is cleanness of teeth; a famine, not of bread, nor water—but of hearing the words of the Lord (Amos 8:2). No; we are famishing; our spiritual meals are light! Then He comes and spreads a table in the wilderness. He feeds us with the finest of the wheat. He gives us His own flesh to eat; and His flesh is food indeed. Such is His tender love, His infinite bounty.

After He has fed them, and renewed the tokens of His love and care; after that, in silent awe, they had feasted together by that wondrous lake, He breaks silence by putting the question, "Do you love me?" He puts it to the most jealous of His disciples, much more to all of us. And this is the sound of His voice; which we now hear, putting to us the question, "Do you love me?" What is our answer?