

His  
Last  
Words

by HENRY DURBANVILLE

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*By*

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“ have life through His name ” (chapter 20. 31) ; and of that life five things can be predicated : God is its source ; Christ is its channel ; the Holy Spirit is its power ; Heaven is its sphere ; and Eternity, its duration.

*Chapters 13 to 17.*

In these chapters, which lie between the record of His manifestation to the world, and that of His betrayal and death, our Lord calls His own apart ; and by consolations, instructions, promises, and revelations, completely unveils to them His loving heart, and His purposes concerning them. Here He prepares them for the change-over from His life *with* them, to His life *in* them, when the Spirit would have come. Because in this section of the Word, the writer is dealing with a condition of things that lie beyond it, Christ’s atoning death on Calvary is only once directly, and once indirectly, referred to : John 15. 13 : 16. 16. “ A little while, and ye shall not see Me ”—i.e. when Christ would be in the tomb ; “ and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me ”—i.e. during the subsequent forty days ; “ because I go to the Father ”—His ascension. It should be noted that while chapters 1 to 12 cover a period of three years, chapters 13 to 17 are the records of a single evening.

*Chapter contents.*

*Chapter 13* has been spoken of as an annexe to this glorious Westminster Abbey of the Gospel. It speaks of five fundamental principles which underlie the creeds of all the orthodox churches : a common cleansing, a common humility, a common meal, a common love, and a common loyalty.

*Chapter 14* unveils our eternal Home, and tells of the difficulties which we shall encounter, and of the provisions that are at our disposal, as we journey towards it.

*Chapter 15* describes the fruitful life, the friendship of the Lord Jesus, and the enmity of the world.

*Chapter 16* sets forth the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the world, and His place as Comforter and Illuminator of the Church.

*Chapter 17* records the high-priestly prayer of our Lord, in listening to which "the disposition to enquire is lost in the impulse to adore".

In these chapters the Master speaks of five personal things : My commandments (14. 21)—which we are to obey ; My peace (14. 27)—which we are to appropriate ; My love (15. 9)—which we are to enjoy ; My joy (15. 11)—which we are to experience ; and, My glory (17. 24)—which we shall one day behold.

#### *His last words.*

Last words are precious ; and in these five chapters we have our Lord's farewell messages to His disciples, spoken just before He passed to Gethsemane and Calvary. This section of the Bible has always made an irresistible appeal to the children of God. "The atmosphere in which we find ourselves here, the various themes with which it deals, the profound significance of the language, the solemn crisis which it records : all is of absorbing interest to the Christian heart. Nowhere else do the blessed lights of our Lord's superhuman dignity, and human tenderness, shine with such lambent brightness. Nowhere else is the speech

at once so simple and so deep. Nowhere else have we the heart of God so unveiled to us. On no other page of the Bible have so many eyes, glistening with tears, looked, and had the tears dried." Here we have His highest self-revelation in *speech*, just as in the Cross we have His perfect self-revelation in *act*.

CHAPTER I  
THE PREAMBLE  
(John 13. 1)

**I**T is the last evening of the earthly life of our Lord. He commences to-night a journey that will terminate in His Father's House ; but although He knows that the journey leads Home by way of Gethsemane and Calvary, He is more concerned about the problems and difficulties and troubles of His beloved disciples than about His own impending agony. Hence come the wonderful words of verse 1, forming, as they do, an inexpressibly precious opening to the sacred record. " Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

He knew that His hour had come. Twice previously (John 7. 30 and 8. 20) it had been said that no man laid hands on Him because His hour had not *yet* come ; but that can be said no longer. For Him, however, the " hour " is merely the time when He should return to the Heavenly Land ; and the dominant concern in His mind was the effect which His departure would have upon " His own ". That last expression was used in chapter 1. 11 of the Jews nationally ; here it is used of the disciples individually. Of these disciples the declaration is made that " He loved them unto the end "—that is, to the last in time, and to the uttermost

in degree. We shall see as we proceed, that His love for them was of the most practical kind. It found occasions for its exercise in silencing their fears, in dispelling their ignorance, in banishing their sorrows.

CHAPTER II  
THE FEET-WASHING  
(John 13. 2-17)

**F**EET-WASHING at meal-time was a common eastern custom (Gen. 18. 1-4). It was generally performed by one in a humble position (1 Sam. 25. 41) and before the guests sat down to eat. Why was it not so performed on this occasion? The answer is found in Luke 22. 24-30 : see particularly verse 27. Instead of seeking to serve one another, they were actually scrambling for honours while under the very shadow of the Cross.

The *nature* of the act is described in verses 2 to 5 ; and it is instructive to compare these verses with Phil. 2. 7, 8. " He laid aside His garments "—" He made Himself of no reputation ". " He took a towel and girded Himself "—" He took upon Him the form of a servant ". " He poureth water into a bason and began to wash the disciples' feet "—" He humbled Himself ". The Lord of the Universe in self-forgetting love, in self-denying devotion, in self-abasing service, stoops to do the work of a slave.

The *significance* of the act is set forth in verses 6 to 11. Primarily it was one of amazing humility ; but in one of his blunt, hasty speeches, Peter raises an objection (verses 8 and 9) which enables our Lord to illustrate a great spiritual truth (verse 10). The Greek word for " washed " in verse 10 is " bathed " ; it signifies the washing of the whole body. " He that is

bathed needeth not save to wash his feet." A person having bathed, walked to the dressing-room, and, in the walk, contracted defilement. It was necessary, therefore, not again to plunge into the bath, but merely to wash the feet before adjusting the sandals. The cleansing of regeneration needs no repetition; the washing of renewal needs it constantly (Titus 3. 5). Cleansed once for all at Calvary, where He gave Himself for her (Eph. 5. 25)—the Bride of the Lamb, as she journeys through this world, stands in need of daily renewal, by the washing of the water of the Word (Eph. 5. 26); and that necessity will continue until she reaches the palace of the King, where she shall put on her robes of immortality (Eph. 5. 27); and where she shall walk with Him in the whiteness of unsullied purity forever (Rev. 3. 4).

The *lesson* of the feet-washing is conveyed in verses 12 to 17. As the custom is confined to the East, where sandals are worn, it is unnecessary for us of the West to carry it out literally. Our Lord did not establish a custom to be followed, but set before us a type or example of the service which we ought to render to one another. We should be careful, however, that the water with which we wash the feet of another is neither icily cold nor scaldingly hot; that the service is performed neither officiously nor uncharitably, but meekly, considering ourselves "lest we also be tempted".

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (verse 17). A beatitude can be earned only if knowledge issues in action, as James I. 22-25 makes clear. The order is—knowledge, obedience, blessedness; and if the foregoing truth no longer stirs us to holy

activity on behalf of our brethren, let us remind ourselves of the words of Coleridge, the Christian philosopher : “ The way to restore an old truth to its pristine brightness, is to translate it into obedience ”. Let us remember always, that our happiness depends upon the degree with which we correlate our knowledge and our duty.



## CHAPTER III

### JUDAS

(John 13. 18-30)

**T**HERE is much about the personality of Judas that remains wrapped in mystery. Some expositors speak of him as "an incarnate demon": "one of you is a devil" (John 6. 70); "the son of perdition" (John 17. 12); who, having performed his awful deed, went "to his own place" (Acts 1. 25). But there are grave difficulties in that interpretation; and one feels that we are on surer ground if we take the narrative as being the record of a human life, of a man like ourselves—subject to temptation, but with the freedom and responsibility that belong to us all. The supreme lesson of his life is the danger of the love of money (John 12. 4-6). Covetousness blunted all moral sensibility; and, since "character is consolidated habit, and is ever tending to permanence", he halted not until he betrayed and sold, for thirty pieces of silver—£3/10/5 in British currency—the kindest, the noblest, the only perfect Man that has ever appeared in this world (Mat. 27. 3-4).

On two occasions (John 13. 19; 14. 29) our Lord informed His disciples of what lay ahead of them. Had the betrayal of Judas come without pre-intimation, it might have shattered the little band by introducing an element of suspicion that would have made mutual confidence impossible. Any one of the group might have suspected the others of possible collusion with the

traitor. The consummation of the treachery, therefore, confirmed rather than shook, their faith in Him.

The unmasking of Judas is in three stages. There is first, in verse 18, the gentle hint which Judas failed to take. Then, in verse 21, our Lord declares in explicit terms: "one of you shall betray Me". Finally, Peter's request to John, and John's question to the Master, resulted in the latter's pointing to Judas as the guilty one: verse 26.

After receiving the sop, there came an accession of satanic impulse that drove the traitor to his terrible deed: verses 27-30. "He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night" (verse 30). Departing from the presence of Him Who is the Light of the world, he went forth into the outer darkness: for it was night, sevenfold night, a midnight darkness that might be felt.

Outside, events are now leading to the Cross; inside, the sorrowful group is being prepared for their coming great commission.

CHAPTER IV  
THE ARRIVAL OF THE HOUR  
(John 13. 31-33)

WHEN Judas had gone from the guest-chamber, the atmosphere immediately changed. The tension was at once relaxed ; and our Lord began to prepare them for the events which now lay only a few hours before them. “ By the removal of Judas,” says Dr. Westcott, “ the conflict, which Christ had sustained in His human nature, was decided. As very Man He had finally overcome. At the moment when Judas went out, the passion was virtually accomplished.”

“ When he was gone out, Jesus said : ‘ Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him ’ ” (verse 31). *Christ glorified God in His death.* God’s attributes—justice, truth, love—all were harmonized and vindicated at the Cross. On Calvary mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other (Psa. 85. 10). *God glorified Christ by raising Him from the dead,* and placing Him on the throne of the universe (Phil. 2. 9-11). From the height of His own glory, which He beholds in anticipation, He turns with pitying love to His “ little children ”, who will one day share that glory (John 13. 33 ; Col. 3. 4).

CHAPTER V  
THE NEW COMMANDMENT  
(John 13. 34-35)

“ **A** NEW commandment I give unto you : that ye love one another as I have loved you ” (verse 34). Christ’s aim, on the night of His betrayal, was to introduce a new dynamic conception of love into the hearts of His disciples. Under *law* the Israelite was to love his neighbour *as himself* (Lev. 19. 18). Under *grace* the disciple is to love his neighbour *as Christ loved him* (John 13. 34). And so it comes about, that the matchless affection which the Lord Jesus has for His own, becomes the pattern and foundation, the model and standard, of their love for the brethren (1 John 3. 16). By the manifestation of such love they would declare and attest their discipleship (John 13. 35).

CHAPTER VI  
PETER'S FALL  
(John 13. 36-38)

**B**ETWEEN John chapter 13, verse 36 and chapter 14, verse 31 a series of questions by Peter, Thomas, Philip, and Judas Thaddeus, were put to the Master. These questions deal with super-earthly matters. The disciples were peering into the mystery of what lies beyond life, and craved for information thereon. The Lord's answers hushed them into peace.

In chapter 13, verse 36 Peter is told that although his arrival in Heaven may be delayed, nevertheless it is guaranteed. "Simon Peter said unto Him : ' Lord, whither goest Thou ? ' Jesus answered him : ' Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me *now* ; but thou shalt follow Me *afterwards* '." There is symbolic, as well as historic, truth in Joshua 3. 6 ; for, as the passage through Jordan had to be made by the Ark alone, so Christ had to pass through the waters of Golgotha by Himself, and through these waters Peter could not accompany Him. Afterwards, like the Israelites, he would pass through the river dry-shod. Verses 37 and 38 reveal that Peter had not yet learned the instability of his own heart. In verse 6 of our chapter he was too backward, and in verse 9, too forward. In verse 37 he was too courageous, and in verse 38, too cowardly. Within twenty-four hours, after he had boasted that he would be loyal unto death, he denied the One Whom he loved so well.

When we think of the outstandingly great apostle which he ultimately became, one is reminded of the dramatist's word : " The best of men are moulded out of faults ".

### *Peter and Judas*

Two men in the apostolic band sinned deeply—Peter and Judas ; but how vastly different were the issues that flowed from their sins. Peter was a backslider ; Judas was an apostate. The enemy tripped Peter ; but he trapped Judas. Later on, the broken-hearted fisherman wept tears of repentance, and sobbed out his sorrow on the bosom of the Master Whom he so deeply revered (Luke 24. 34 ; 1 Cor. 15. 4-5). Judas, in the bitterness of remorse, hanged himself (Acts 1. 18).

Lest this volume should fall into the hands of one who may have sinned greatly, and who, as a consequence, may be tempted to give way to despair, let me tell the following story. In a packed church in France, one Easter Sunday, the text was : " Then Judas . . . departed . . . and hanged himself " (Mat. 27. 3-5). The preacher ended his message by saying : " I was speaking on this subject to the girls in school, and I said: ' If you had acted as Judas did, would you have gone and hanged yourself ? ' One girl replied : ' I would have hung myself round the neck of Jesus ' ". Brother man, sister woman, wherever you may be—however deeply you may have fallen—despair not. If God were strict to mark iniquities, not one of us could stand ; but there is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared and loved (Psa. 130. 3-4). " Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out," says our Saviour (John 6. 37). He is not willing that any should

perish (2 Peter 3. 9). He frankly forgives (Luke 7. 42). He abundantly pardons (Isa. 55. 7). Whitfield summed it up in one tremendous statement, when he said that God will receive even the devil's castaways.

CHAPTER VII  
THE INEXHAUSTIBLE CHAPTER  
(John 14)

WHEN the words of John 14 were read to a great scholar as he lay dying, he said : “ Inexhaustible, inexhaustible ! ” Of all divine utterances this one has lifted highest the curtain that separates this world from the next. Its words are a mine of comfort, a fountain of refreshment. We turn to them in the loftiest, the saddest, and the closing hours of life. The Voice that speaks them, does so authoritatively as well as sympathetically ; and is as fresh when heard to-day, as it was in the upper room in Jerusalem long ago. “ Scarcely can we cite these wonderful words without passing at once beyond the limits of the historical situation. They breathe with unchanging freshness, through the long centuries of faith, and to-day are bringing a new sense of a lasting home to some that have not found it upon earth. They dispel the darkness beyond the grave, and give secure expectations as we approach it.” Here, indeed, we find something more than human, something of another world, to silence our misgivings and reassure our faith.

The disciples to whom these words were originally spoken, were in great distress. The Master had told them that one of their number would betray Him (John 13. 21) ; that, within a few hours, another would deny Him (chapter 13. 38) ; and, saddest of all, that He Himself was about to leave them (chapter 13. 33).



Because of these things they were bewildered, confused, burdened, and sorrow filled their hearts. Ever mindful of those whom He loved to the uttermost, our Lord immediately came to their aid ; and, as shown in this chapter (John 14), presents complete antidotes to their grief. He does this first, by unveiling to them the unimaginable splendours of the Heavenly Home which lay ahead of them (verses 1 to 3) ; and secondly, by assuring them of divine and unlimited resources as, through perils and antagonisms, they journey towards it (verses 4 to 27).

We should always bear in mind that these final messages of our Lord have in view, not only the disciples who were His earthly companions, but also every man and woman down the centuries who, through their word, would believe on His name (see John 17. 20). Happy indeed is it for us that, in our Master's teaching, the personal and immediate is thus combined with the universal and perpetual ; for that fact entitles us to take to our hearts, here and to-day, all the spiritual wealth with which these discourses abound. Shall we now look closely, in chapters which follow, at some of these priceless gems ?

CHAPTER VIII  
THE UNTRoubLED HEART  
(John 14. 1)

“LET not your heart be troubled : ye believe in God, believe also in Me.” Many can say with Job (chapter 5. 7) that man is born unto trouble ; for their passage through life is marked by a succession of happenings that have turned existence into one long-drawn-out catastrophe. They tread a path that is beset with difficulties ; it is “ through much tribulation that we enter the kingdom of God ”. To us all, therefore, the words in the opening verses of John 14 come laden with comfort, with healing, and with uplifting power. They are words that have consoled the prisoner in his lonely dungeon, the slave in his little cabin, the pilgrim on his weary journey, the martyr marching to his painful death. For heart trouble there is but one remedy, and it is prescribed by the Good Physician.

“ Let not your *heart* be troubled.” The italicized word includes the entire personality—intellect, emotion, and will. “ Let not your heart be *troubled*.” The word means, to be agitated, to be disturbed, or thrown into confusion, as its use in John 5. 7 indicates. To counteract the sorrows which were filling their hearts, the Master imparts to His disciples consolations appropriate to their griefs, and encouragements adapted to their fears. He claims their faith, strengthens their hope, deepens their love.

*He claims their faith.*

“Ye believe in God, believe also in Me” (verse 1). It is an interesting fact that the Greek word which, in John 14. 1, is twice translated “believe”: “ye believe in God, believe also in Me”, is the same word which in John 2. 24 is translated “commit”: “Jesus did not commit Himself unto them”. It means “to entrust oneself to”. That clearly indicates that the idea of “committal” is latent in the faith which our Lord demands; and a most apt illustration of it comes from the New Hebridean Islands. It appears that, for some time after Dr. John G. Paton got to his sphere of labour, he had great difficulty in finding an appropriate word for “faith” or “trust”; and much prayer was made that God would guide the missionary to the right word. One day, while he was seated on a chair in his room, an intelligent native entered. “Taea,” said the Doctor, “what am I doing now?” “Koikae ana Misi—you are resting master,” replied the native. Dr. Paton had heard that word before, but it was not the word which he wanted. He then drew up his feet, placed them upon the bar of the chair, and leaning back, said: “What am I doing now?” The man immediately replied: “Fakarongrongo Misi—you are leaning wholly; you have lifted yourself from every other support”. “That’s it,” exclaimed the missionary, with holy joy; and to-day, “Fakarongrongo Jesu ea anea moure”—“leaning on Jesus unto eternal life—reposing wholly upon the Saviour”—is the Aniwaniwan’s definition of faith in Christ. The famous Scottish minister, Dr. Thomas Chalmers, used a word of similar meaning to describe the act of trusting the Saviour: the word “lippen”—“lippen to Him”—i.e. trust Him

as a man does when he places himself unreservedly in the hands of a brilliant physician. When we remember that the One Who thus claims our confidence is Truth personified—verse 6—we can unquestioningly receive His utterances, and so enjoy, for evermore, the soul-satisfying unveilings, both of the unseen and of the present worlds, which they present.

*He strengthens their hope.*

“ In My Father’s house are many mansions ” (verse 2). Their earthly sun was sinking, but the stars were coming out in the sky to tell of a greater and a grander universe. Somewhere in that great universe, in the infinite realms of space, God has a place which He calls His “ Home ” ; a house of many mansions, to which, one by one, He welcomes His children ; and to which, sooner or later, He shall conduct all who are His.

“ My Father’s House ! No strange and foreign land ;  
No wonderful new world, too coldly grand ;  
But Home—and a Father’s outstretched, welcoming  
hand.”

Those whose experiences in this world have made them conscious of homelessness and loneliness, can look forward to mansions of eternal abode, to couches of eternal rest, to the board of an eternal festival. Meantime, they are strangers and pilgrims on the earth : strangers because they are *from* Home ; pilgrims because they are *going* Home.

*He deepens their love.*

“ I will come again, and receive you unto Myself ” (verse 3). It is the personal presence of the Lord Jesus that elicits the affections, and brings abiding rest to

the heart. In John 14. 3 we are told of the One Who is coming to conduct us Home ; 1 John 3. 2, of the transformation which will take place when we shall see Him face to face ; 1 Thes. 4. 17 assures us that we shall be with Him always ; and Psa. 17. 15, that when these things become accomplished facts, we shall be abundantly and everlastingly satisfied. Such knowledge is too wonderful for us ; but the childlike acceptance of it as being literally true, will send us joyfully along the pathway of Christian discipleship,

“ Until at last when earth’s day’s work is ended,  
We meet Thee in the blessed realms above  
From whence Thou camest, where Thou hast ascended,  
Thy everlasting Home of peace and love.”

We shall examine these entrancing truths more fully presently ; but this brief glance at them is enough to banish unrest, and to bring the heart into a condition of peace. Dr. Rendel Harris tells of a busy man in the metropolis whose notepaper gave his telegraphic address as, “ Undisturbed, London ”. He goes on to say that, amidst the roar of the city’s traffic, God was that man’s dwelling-place ; and that thus it continued until the termination of his leasehold in the Church militant, when he went to take up his freehold in the Church triumphant.

**Note.** The foregoing chapter is published in separate form under the title “ THE SECRET OF THE UNTRoubLED HEART ”.

CHAPTER IX  
THE MANY MANSIONS  
(John 14. 2)

“ **I**N My Father’s house are many mansions : if it were not so I would have told you ” (verse 2). In the New Testament there are three outstanding illustrations that are used to portray for us the world beyond. It is spoken of as a *country* (Heb. 11. 16) ; as a *city* (Heb. 11. 10) ; and as a *home* (John 14. 2). There is, however, not anywhere else in the Bible, a view of the heavenly world so clear and so full, and yet so brief and so simple, as is contained in the words of John 14. 2. There are *mansions* there ; mansions—not made with human hands—changeless and eternal. Three things are suggested by the word : permanence, spaciousness, variety. There are *many* mansions, infinitely large in number, each suited to the inhabitant. It is a *house* of many mansions : unity presides over all variety. It is a *Father’s* house—a great paternal dwelling-place where brothers and sisters form one family, abiding under His eye and hand.

“ Oh think ! To step ashore and that shore Heaven ;  
To breathe new air, and that celestial air ;  
To feel refreshed and know ’tis immortality.  
Oh think ! To pass from storm and stress  
To one unbroken calm ; to wake and find it Glory.”

God will be there in His fulness ; Christ in His majesty ; redeemed humanity in the rapture and radiance of its everlasting bliss. Into that Home all

the ransomed from every tribe of the peopled earth, and from every age of the history of man, shall enter, and there abide forever. Archbishop Mowll says that when visiting a certain home, he was asked to sign his name in the guest-book. Before he did so his hostess drew his attention to these lines, which she had written on the opening page :

“ When the great Guest-Book in the House above,  
Lies spread before us in the Home of Love,  
One record only waits the writer’s name :  
No record of departure ; only ‘ Came ’.”

In the earthly Eden there was a way *out*, but not in (Gen. 3. 24) ; in our heavenly dwelling-place there is a way *in*, but not out (Rev. 3. 12).

*Unchallengeable certainties.*

“ If it were not so I would have told you.” “ When God wants to carry a point with the human race,” says Emerson, “ He places His argument in the instincts of the heart ”. One of the deepest of those instincts is the conviction of our immortality. So deeply rooted is this conviction, that Tennyson once said : “ If Immortality were not true, I would sink my head to-night in a chloroformed handkerchief and have done with it all ”. To the instincts of the heart, the Lord Jesus added many disclosures of the unseen world. He brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel (2 Tim. 1. 10) : and, by doing so, had raised many joyful hopes in the hearts of the men who had companied with Him, for the three years of His earthly ministry. He now says of the one great hope that includes them all : “ If it were not so I would have told you ”. “ If,” says Dr. Boreham, “ if, out beyond the shades of death there

awaited us any experience of loneliness or homelessness, He would have told us all about it. If, in that blaze of mystery and pageant of wonder, upon which mortal eyes have never gazed, there were anything to startle or affright us, He would have mentioned it. Had there been a shadow of uncertainty as to our felicity in that new life, He would have warned us. Since all is well, there is nothing to be said." We must trust His silence as well as His speech ; for, when we make our superb adventure into the infinitudes that lie within the veil, we shall find everything to be beyond our highest expectation.

*The prepared place.*

"I go to prepare a place for you." The word "prepare" speaks of perfect completeness and comfort. The place is furnished by the King Himself, and nothing will be lacking that sovereign love could plan. It will please the eye, and charm the ear, and delight the mind, and gladden the heart. "O Homestead," says one weary traveller, "over whose roof is never cast the shadow of an evening cloud, across whose threshold the sound of sorrow is never heard ; built with pinnacles, the spires of celestial beauty, amid the palm trees of the City of God ; when shall I come to thee ? " As there is always a positive relation between the means and the end, it follows that a Home that has taken so long to prepare cannot be a transient one. Much is hidden from us about the future which we would like to know ; but of the fact of the many mansions, and of the prepared place, there is no obscurity and no doubt.

The writer of this book, who is now advancing in



years, is becoming increasingly conscious of the reality and blessedness of these things. But it was not always so ; for, like many others, in the presence of some of the inscrutable things of life, he had times of perplexity, of darkness, and of doubt. In the course of his reading in those bygone days, however, he happened upon *The Life and Letters of George John Romanes*, some extracts from which greatly helped him. That great and good man was a scientist of outstanding ability. Although he was blessed with all that heart could wish for—happily married : a charming personality : highly gifted as a speaker and as a writer : financially independent ; intellectual difficulties led him into the wilderness of scepticism, from which he was never fully delivered until a few weeks before his death. As he moved away from his old moorings, he said, pathetically : “ And, forasmuch as I am far from being able to agree with those who affirm that the twilight doctrine of the new faith is a desirable substitute for the waning splendour of the old, I am not ashamed to confess that with this virtual negation of God, the universe to me has lost its soul of loveliness ; and although from henceforth, the precept to ‘ work while it is day ’, will doubtless but gain an intensified force from the terribly intensified meaning of the words that ‘ the night cometh when no man can work ’ ; yet when at times I think, as think at times I must, of the appalling contrast between the hallowed glory of the creed which once was mine, and the lonely mystery of existence as now I find it ; at such times I shall ever feel it impossible to avoid the sharpest pang of which my nature is susceptible ”. His beloved wife gives us the glad assurance that, ultimately, “ he arrived very slowly,

very painfully, but very surely, at the Christian position " ; and that he finished up with a chastened, a purified, and a victorious faith. But ah, how much joy Mr. Romanes missed on his way to the Celestial Land ! We have mentioned these things because we desire to utter this word of warning, especially to the young men and women of our time : Beware of harbouring in your heart anything that contradicts, or that tends to weaken your faith in, the written Word of God.

CHAPTER X  
THE GREAT REUNION  
(John 14. 3)

“ **I**F I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also ” (John 14. 3). The teaching of this wonderful verse may be summarized in three words, the first of which is,

*Return.*

“ If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again.” In announcing that He was going from them, He makes it perfectly clear that the separation was but the first step to abiding reunion. “ If I go . . . I will come again.” The New Testament gives a threefold testimony to the second coming of Christ :

(1) The testimony of the Master Himself (John 14. 1-3).

(2) The testimony of the heavenly messengers (Acts 1. 9-11).

(3) The testimony of the apostles. Paul speaks for them all when he says that the commemoration feast—observed by all the historic Christian churches—is to continue, only “ till He come ” (1 Cor. 11. 26).

Observe how these testimonies coincide. “ *I will come again,*” said our Saviour ; “ *this same Jesus* ” shall come again, say the messengers ; “ *the Lord Himself* ” shall come again, says Paul (1 Thes. 4. 16). As the *departure* was visible, corporeal, literal, personal, local, so will be the *return*. This great hope is the believer’s

joy in life (Rom. 5. 2); the mourner's comfort in bereavement (1 Thes. 4. 13-18); the saint's incentive to holiness (1 John 3. 2-3).

Of the beloved of the Lord who, one by one, down the long years, have been passing hence, Scripture says that they depart to be with Christ (Phil. 1. 23). As the hour of their passing drew near, there is a sense in which it could be said to them individually: "The Master is come and calleth for thee". He comes to such in the same way that He comes to the two or three that are gathered in His name (Mat. 18. 20): corporeally absent but spiritually present. How delightfully interesting from this point of view is Bunyan's story of the departure of Christiana, wife of Christian the pilgrim, to the Celestial City. "The last word she was heard to say here was: 'I come, Lord, to be with Thee and bless Thee'."

#### *Reception.*

"And receive you unto Myself." Dr. Story tells us that when Mrs. Oliphant was nearing death, she said: "I am dying; I do not think I can last through the night". Thinking of her literary work and of the touching efforts her eager imagination had made to lift the impenetrable veil, he said to her: "The world to which you are going is a familiar world to you". "I have no thoughts," she said, "not even of my boys; but only of my Saviour waiting to receive me, and of my Father". It was an echo of the Home-going of Stephen (Acts 7. 59).

#### *Reunion.*

"That where I am, there ye may be also." The teaching has advanced from the place to the Person;

from the mansions, to the Lord of the mansions. The object of *faith* on earth—"Whom having not seen, ye love" (1 Peter 1. 8), will be the object of *sight* in heaven, where "we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3. 2). On two other occasions does our Lord refer to this—John 12. 26 and 17. 24; and Canon Bernard voices the feelings of renewed hearts in anticipation of it, when he says :

" Let me be with Thee where Thou art,  
My Saviour, mine Eternal Rest ;  
Then only will this longing heart  
Be fully and forever blest.  
Let me be with Thee where Thou art,  
Where none can die, where none remove,  
There neither death nor life will part  
Me, from Thy presence and Thy love."

\* \* \*

We summarize these matchless verses, thus :

The *description* of Heaven—"In My Father's house are many mansions".

The *assurance* of it—"If it were not so, I would have told you".

The *furnishing* of it—"I go to prepare a place for you".

The *safe conduct* to it—"I will come again, and receive you unto Myself".

The *glory* of it—"That where I am, there ye may be also".

Well might Bunyan say : "Children, the milk and honey are beyond the wilderness".

" The manna and the springing well  
Suffice for every need:  
And Eshcol's grapes the story tell  
Of where our path doth lead."

CHAPTER XI  
THE WAY HOME  
(John 14. 4-6)

THE description of our Heavenly Home and of its companionships having been completed, the Master goes on to speak of the road that leads to that happy place, and of the provisions which He has made for us as we travel to it. An old expositor—M. Godet—has finely pointed out that this finds illustration in what so frequently happens amongst ourselves. “ So, a dying father,” he says, “ after gathering his children round him, begins by speaking to them of his end, and of the time which will immediately follow. Then the perspective of their future career opens out before his thoughts, and he tells them what the world will be to them, and what they will have to do in it ; after which his mind falls back upon the actual situation, and draws from its depths a supreme word, and a last farewell.”

From contemplation of the eternal future, we are brought back to earth by the questionings of Thomas, a man slow of faith but full of love—a practical pessimist. The consciousness of impending calamity was so strong in his mind, that he could take no comfort even from the radiant prospect that our Lord had opened to his view ; and he craved for information, not only about the final goal, but also about the road that leads to it (verses 4 and 5). The Master answers in verse 6 : that God is the *goal* ; but that He is the *way*. “ I am

the way, the truth, and the life : no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."

" Across the infinite gulf which parts the human from the divine, the creature from the Creator, the sinner from the Holy One, Jesus has thrown a permanent way in His own incarnate life and death. He goes to His Father in right of His sonship, His sinless obedience, His fulfilment of all righteousness ; we go there in virtue of our union with Him." Says Thomas A'Kempis : " Without the way there is no going ; without the truth there is no knowing ; without the life there is no living. I am the way which thou oughtest to follow, the truth which thou oughtest to trust, the life which thou oughtest to live " : the inviolable way, the infallible truth, the endless life. He is the way in the practical sphere, the truth in the intellectual sphere, the life in the spiritual sphere : the way out of sin, the way through life, the way home to God. The claims implicit in the words of verse 6 are exclusive, absolute, universal ; and they demonstrate the truth that Christianity is Christ. Platonism could exist without Plato, Buddhism without Buddha, Confucianism without Confucius ; but Christianity could not exist without our risen Lord. He not only sets forth the ideal, but is Himself the dynamic Power by which alone it can be realized (Gal. 2. 20).

But, just as the soul of the ancient people of God was much discouraged because of the difficulties which they encountered on the way to their inheritance (Num. 21. 4) ; so was it with Thomas, and so is it with ourselves. And the remainder of this discourse will show us how abundantly our matchless Saviour places at our disposal divine resources, that will enable us to over-

come all the difficulties, and to meet all the discouragements, that we may encounter, " till travelling days are done ".



CHAPTER XII  
PHILIP'S REQUEST  
(John 14. 7-11)

**W**E come now to Philip's request : " Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us ". Philip's motto was : " seeing is believing ". He wanted a visible manifestation of God ; a theophany such as was granted to Moses (Exodus 24) ; and to Isaiah (chapter 6). Our Lord answers in a statement which forms one of the greatest assertions of the Gospel, and which is incomprehensible apart from the claim to deity. " He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." All other means of knowing God, are like the fragmentary syllables of a great word. He—the Logos—perfectly expressed God (John 1. 18 ; 2 Cor. 4. 6 ; Heb. 1. 1-3). The Father is just like Jesus. The deep yearning which expresses itself in Philip's request, is the great cry of universal humanity. He Himself is the ground of belief ; but if the disciples could not rise to such belief, then let the works which they had seen with their eyes, convince them (verses 9 to 11).

CHAPTER XIII  
THE GREATER WORKS  
(John 14. 12-14)

“**V**ERILY, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also ; and greater works than these shall he do ; because I go unto My Father ” (verse 12). The mightier achievements spoken of in these verses do not refer to physical miracles ; for our Lord’s miracles were unique and unsurpassable. A clue to what is meant is given in the words : “ because I go unto My Father ”. The death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven, of the Lord Jesus, would soon be historical facts, and the result would be the release of divine power by the Holy Spirit (John 16. 7). That mighty power would be manifest, not so much in healing the leper, stilling the tempest, and raising the dead, as in spiritual triumphs of a more exalted nature, and with more enduring results. One has only to refer to Acts to find an illustration of what is meant. By one message alone, preached by Spirit-anointed lips, three thousand souls were saved (Acts 2. 41). The soul is greater than the body, as the jewel exceeds in value the case which contains it. Marvels of such soul-transforming power have been in evidence right down the Christian centuries. It should be noted that this world has been visited in turn by the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. From the Creation to the Incarnation, God the Father was working (John 5. 17) ; from the Incarnation to the

Cross, God the Son was working (John 9. 4) ; and from Pentecost to the present day, God the Spirit has been working (Rom. 15. 18-19).

Linked with the power of the Spirit are the resources of prayer (verses 13 and 14). The condition of successful prayer is set forth in verse 13—"in My name"; the scope of it—"whatsoever ye shall ask"; the certainty of it—"that will I do"; and the design of it—that our "Father may be glorified". The key to effective praying is thus in the phrase, "in My name". "If ye shall ask any thing in My name, I will do it." Our Lord uses that phrase five times in these chapters : John 14. 13 ; 14. 14 ; 15. 16 ; 16. 23 ; 16. 24. What does He mean by it ? It is not a mere devotional form ; but a new ground on which the worshipper stands, and a new plea for the success of his petitions. Prayer in His name has His authority, and the unqualified promise is given that all prayer so presented, will be heard and answered (verse 14). Let us accept that promise with childlike faith and gratitude ; and let us ask in penitence but with faith, in humility but with confidence, with desire for His blessing but with entire submission to His will. The words stand as a challenge, and are for our encouragement : "If ye ask . . . I will do".

#### *Love and Obedience.*

"If ye love Me keep My commandments" (verse 15). Love and obedience are cause and effect : depth of love is manifest in fulness of obedience. Just as our Lord simplified the old Law, declaring it to be love to God, and to our neighbour (Mat. 22. 35-40) ; so, the new commandment is summed up in the words, "that

ye love one another, as I have loved you ” (John 13. 34). This love is the most practical thing in the world. The cultivation of religious emotion without the development of practical godliness, is injurious to the soul ; feeling which does not end in action is wasted. All emotional, mystical experiences must submit to the plain test : do they help to obedience ? If they do, they are valuable : if they do not, they are useless.

CHAPTER XIV  
THE GATEWAY TO DEEPER THINGS  
(John 14. 16-26)

WE come now to a portion of our subject which opens the gateway to the profoundest experiences and noblest attainments of the Christian life. Just as verses 8 to 11 speak of an objective manifestation of God—something that they could behold (verse 9), so, verses 16 to 24 speak of a subjective manifestation of God—something that they could experience (verse 21). For the first of these, faith is essential (verses 10-11) ; for the second, loving obedience (verse 23). God is *outwardly* revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ, the historical Personality ; He is *inwardly* communicated to us in the Holy Spirit Who dwells within our personality—enlightening the mind, enriching the heart, empowering the will. Shall we now examine the sacred words very briefly ?

The word “ Comforter ” (verse 16) is found only in the writings of John : four times in his Gospel (chapters 14. 16 ; 14. 26 ; 15. 26 ; 16. 7) ; and once in his first epistle (chap. 2. 1), where it is translated “ Advocate ”. The word means, “ one called to the side of another to aid him ”. It is used of one who pleads another’s cause before a judge, counsel for the defence, legal assistant, advocate. Grecian courts allowed a defendant to bring with him any friendly and competent person who could assist him in the presentation of his case. The various forms of help rendered by our

Comforter, the Holy Spirit, include consolation for the afflicted, instruction for the ignorant, strength for the helpless. Of this divine Personality it is said that "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (verse 17). Let us observe the prepositions, "with" and "in": they reveal the basic difference between the past and the present dispensations. The Old Testament is full of the thought of the presence of God *with* His people (Ex. 33. 14, Psa. 23. 4, Isa. 43. 2). The New Testament is full of the thought of God *in* His people (2 Cor. 6. 16; Gal. 2. 20; 1 Cor. 6. 19).

There are three paradoxes in verses 18 and 19; the absent Christ is present, the unseen Christ is visible, the dying Christ is life-giving. "Yet a little while"—about thirty hours—"and the world seeth Me no more". From the moment at which our Lord was taken down from the Cross and entombed, He disappeared from the eyes of the world. He re-appeared only to His own (Acts 10. 40-41). "At that day"—primarily Pentecost—"ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you" (verse 20). Here we are in the presence of one of

"Those deep simplicities that mock the brain,  
Yet lie within the heart's most easy reach."

Obedience to His commandments is the test of their love, and the condition of divine manifestation (verse 21).

Like Peter, Thomas, and Philip, Judas Thaddeus now utters his perplexity. As a Jew he entertained the general expectation of his nation, that Messiah's appearance would be outward and visible; but now he perceives that the Master speaks of a personal and private unveiling, and he asks: "Lord, how is it that

Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" Hast Thou altered Thy plan? "Jesus answered and said unto him: 'If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him'" (verses 22, 23). It is thus a spiritual manifestation to the heart that He has in view. By comparing verses 21 and 23 we learn that fidelity to Christ is essential. This fidelity is both emotional—he will "love Me"; and practical—"he will keep My words". Love and obedience are thus reciprocal: together they form the condition of obtaining higher knowledge and deeper fellowship. The word translated "abode" occurs only twice in the New Testament: here, and in John 14. 2 where it is rendered "mansions". The two occurrences bring out the fact that, while faith will bring the soul to heaven (John 14. 1-2), faith and loving obedience bring heaven into the soul (John 14. 23; Rev. 3. 20).

*The teaching of the Spirit.*

The words uttered by the Lord Jesus constitute the sum and substance and standard of what the Holy Spirit teaches; and part of the office of the Spirit was to recall to the memory of the disciples, all things that the Saviour had said. In these discourses the whole of the New Testament is pre-authenticated. "He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you"—hence we have the Gospels (verse 26). "He will guide you into all truth"—thus we have the Epistles (John 16. 13). "He will show you things to come"—finally we have the book of Revelation (John 16. 13).

CHAPTER XV  
THE BEQUEST OF PEACE  
(John 14. 27)

THE first discourse is at an end. It began with the words, "Let not your heart be troubled", and it ends with the same words. Between these two similar sayings lie the reasons why we should not be distressed, and in verse 27, we come to the last of these reasons—the Master's bequest of peace. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." The words indicate that our Lord's desire is that we should journey through life with untroubled hearts, and in the enjoyment of unbroken peace. His ideal for us is that, because of the wondrous salvation with which He has endowed us, we shall have no stings of conscience dipped in the poison of past failure; no unsatisfied desire in our present experience; no foreboding anxiety as we face future uncertainties. The words before us now show how we may come into possession of these priceless boons of heaven. The tranquillity which the Saviour here promises is both a legacy—"Peace I leave with you"; and a gift—"My peace I give unto you"; and the personal pronoun "My" clearly suggests that it is *inward* peace. For, as has been said: "Christ's life outwardly was one of the most troubled lives that was ever lived; tempest and tumult, tumult and tempest, the waves breaking over it all the time till the worn



body was laid in the grave. But the inner life was like a sea of glass. The great calm was always there. At any moment you might have gone to Him and found rest."

But let us think again of the words, "*My peace*". How we value a gift which was the giver's own personal possession : what a special token of intimate friendship we feel it to be. The peace which our Lord wants us to enjoy is that which He Himself enjoyed : the same restfulness in danger, the same equanimity in troublous circumstances, the same freedom from anxiety about the happenings of the hour. This He makes over to His people ; this is His gift to us all. In the glad possession of it we share His unruffled serenity amid the direst happenings and deepest mysteries of life. The three things which will characterize the "times of the end"—distress, perplexity, fear (Luke 21. 25-26)—will be kept at bay from our hearts ; and we shall rejoice to find "God's greatness flowing round our incompleteness ; round our restlessness, His rest".

The exhortation which He bases on the gift of His peace is : "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid". We can dismiss our fears because of the revelation of the many mansions (verse 2), and of our assured arrival there (verse 3); of Him Who is "the way" Home (verse 6) ; of the unveiling of God in the person of our Lord (verse 9) ; of the greater works which we shall do as we pass through this world of sorrow (verse 12) ; of the abiding companionship of the Comforter (verse 16) ; of the fact that the Triune God, by His Spirit, now indwells us (verses 17 and 23) ; and likewise the fact that He promised to keep, in unbroken serenity, the heart that is stayed on Him (verse

27 ; Isa. 26. 3-4).

We cannot more fitly close this section than by quoting the beautiful words employed, and by wishing for the reader the lovely things described, in the old chorus—listen to the music of them :

“ Light that groweth not pale with day’s decrease,  
 Love that never can fail till life shall cease,  
     Joy no sorrow can mar,  
     Hope that shineth afar,  
     Faith serene as a star,  
     And Christ’s own peace.”

\*           \*           \*

*Note on verses 28 to 31.*

When our Lord says, “ My Father is greater than I ”, He speaks of office and function, not of personal worth and dignity, as the context makes clear (verse 28). The future would verify His words and confirm their faith (verse 29). The prince of this world would find nothing in the Lord Jesus upon which he could lay hold—no affinity, because no sin (verse 30). Two things follow : His sinlessness, and the absolute voluntariness of His sacrifice. But in infinite grace He will carry out the mission given Him by His Father, and thus, through death, destroy him that had the power of death. For, in this way, He would set finally free all who had been in the enemy’s power (verse 31 ; Heb. 2. 14 to 18).

“ Arise, let us go hence.” It would seem that after our Lord had delivered the foregoing discourse, He and the little company left the lighted guest-chamber, and went on their way to Gethsemane. The discourse and prayer that follow (John chapters 15, 16, 17) took place after they left the house, and before they crossed the Kedron (John 18. 1).

CHAPTER XVI  
THE CHRISTIAN'S  
THREE RELATIONSHIPS  
(John 15)

IN the familiar fifteenth chapter of John there are set forth for us three different relationships. These are dealt with in chapters which follow this in an ampler and fuller manner, but an easily recognized statement of them is shown by the following brief synopsis.

1. *The Christian's relation to Christ* (verses 1 to 11), that of the branch to the vine. In this section we are called "disciples" (verse 8). We are to be known by what we *are*. Keyword, "Abide". Results—life and fruitfulness.

2. *The Christian's relation to his fellow-Christians* (verses 12 to 17), that of brotherhood and companionship. Here we are called "friends" (verse 15). We are to be known by what we *do*. Keyword, "Love". Results—affection and friendship.

3. *The Christian's relation to the world* (verses 18 to 27). It is one that incurs enmity and violence. Here we are called "witnesses" (verse 27). We are to be known by what we *say*. Keyword, "Hate". Results—hatred and persecution.

CHAPTER XVII  
THE CHRISTIAN'S  
RELATION TO CHRIST  
(John 15. 1-11)

“ I AM the vine, ye are the branches ” (verse 5). In the reading of Scripture it will be observed how largely its writers draw on the symbolism of Nature. They illustrate Truth from the mineral kingdom—pearl, rock, gold ; from the animal kingdom—lion, ox, lamb ; from the celestial kingdom—sun, moon, stars ; and from the vegetable kingdom—rose, lily, vine. In using that symbolism these writers clearly indicate that the kingdoms of Nature and of Grace come from the same creative hand, and that they are governed by the same basic laws. Shall we consider now the parable or symbolism of the vine and its branches, to which our Lord compares the relationship that exists between Himself and His people ? “ I am the vine, ye are the branches ” (verse 5). A parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning, and we shall find that these verses are laden with significance. They set forth the union, without which there could be no fruitfulness (verses 1, 2) ; they illustrate the disciplines and principles that produce much fruit (verses 3-6) ; and they describe the wonderful results that flow from these two things (verses 7-11).

Before we discuss these matters, however, two things should be noted ; and the first is this : we should carefully distinguish between the various figures or

emblems which Scripture uses to define the different relationships that obtain between our Lord and His people. Some of these—as in John 10. 27-29—describe eternal bonds ; others—as in John 15. 1-11—represent only temporary conditions. In John chapter 15, our Lord is not speaking of the believer's salvation, nor of his everlasting security in the heavens : He is discussing our daily life, and shows the way to be fruitful and joyful, as long as we remain on the earth. The second thing to note is that a parable is generally meant to illustrate one great truth : it is like a globe, which touches the substance on which it rests, only at one point. To make every detail teach fundamental truth would be as it were to smash the globe, to destroy the parable. " The scope of a parable is the key of a parable."

#### THE UNION.

" I am the vine, ye are the branches " (verses 1 and 5). We learn, at the outset, that the union between Christ and His people is a living union. It is not imposed mechanically from without, but springs spontaneously from within. It is a union, not of inanimate parts like the cemented-together stones of a building ; but of living members, like the branches of a growing tree. As the same life functions in the windings of the stock, the spreading of the branches, the clinging of the tendrils, the unfolding of the buds, and the maturing of the clusters ; so the same life, which is Christ, expresses itself in our lives. This great truth is not confined to John 15 : see, for example, John 14. 20, 1 Cor. 6. 17, Gal. 2. 20, Col. 1. 27. These show that, in a sense transcending every metaphor, not in theory but in fact, Christ lives in His people.

Another thing we learn is that He and His disciples, together, form one whole, neither being complete without the other. The vine can bear no fruit, if it has no branches ; the branches cannot live apart from the vine. Without the branches the stem is a fruitless thing ; without the stem the branches could not exist. The branch originates nothing ; it merely transmutes the life of the vine into fruit. A branch is really an arm of the vine to hand out grapes, each grape being a green or purple vase filled with the essence of the vine. We learn that the branch depends upon the vine for life ; that the vine depends upon the branch for fruit ; that both life and fruit depend upon the branch abiding in the vine. But there are things that hinder fruitfulness, and we pass now to consider these.

#### THE PRUNING.

“ Every branch bearing fruit, He doth cleanse by pruning, that it may bear more fruit ” (verse 2 : Dr. Young's translation). Without union there could be no living branch ; without pruning there would be very little fruit. The chief tool of the vinedresser is his knife. Pruning looks merciless and wasteful, but it is done scientifically ; there is no random cutting ; nothing is cut away but what it is a gain to lose. Let us note carefully that it is the fruitful branch that is pruned, just as it is the one whom God loves, that He chastens (Heb. 12. 6). Pruning is thus the perfect philosophy of Christian suffering. Is there not an explanation here of many things in our lives difficult to understand ? The spiritual meaning of it came home to Mr. Cecil on one occasion with comforting power. In deep dejection of spirit, because of painful heart-

wounds, he was pacing to and fro in a botanic garden at Oxford, when he observed a fine specimen of the pomegranate, almost cut through the stem. On asking the gardener for the reason, he received the following answer : “ Sir, this tree used to shoot so strong that it bore nothing but leaves. I was therefore obliged to cut it in this manner ; and when it was almost cut through, then it began to bear plenty of fruit ”. Let us ever remember that the One with Whom we have to do—infinite in holy wisdom, as well as boundless in compassionate love—orders our stops as well as our steps. “ He breaks plans, quenches hopes, cuts off ambitions, denies comforts ; nevertheless, every surgery, every mutilation of the living bough, is a deliberate design for richer, riper, clusters of holiness.” That is the end to which all is directed.

“ Precious thought, my Father knoweth, in His love I rest,  
 For whate'er my Father doeth, must be always best ;  
 Well I know the heart that planneth naught but good for  
 me,  
 Joy and sorrow interwoven—love in all I see.”

We should remember, too, that the husbandman is never so near the vine as when he is pruning it. It is the experience of all deeply-taught Christians that God is never so real, or so consciously near, as He is in times of trial (Isa. 43. 2).

“ When through the deep waters I call thee to go,  
 The rivers of sorrow shall not overflow,  
 For I will be with thee thy trials to bless,  
 And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.”

If the methods employed by the husbandman are represented by one word—pruning—so, the responsibilities of the Christian are summed up in one word—

abide. "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit, except it abide in the vine ; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me " (verse 4). Beautifully have these words been translated : " maketh his home in Me, and I will make My home in him ". We dwell in Him, as the part does in the whole, as the branch does in the vine. He dwells in us even as the substance of the whole is in the part, and as the life of the vine is in the branch. When living thus in fellowship with Christ, a channel is formed whereby His life flows into ours, transforming the whole into leaf, and flower, and fruit. In one sense we abide there passively in utter helplessness ; in another sense the human will comes in, and we actively co-operate. The indwelling Christ does not cancel the human personality : He pervades and empowers it. " I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." It is a combination of 2 Cor. 3. 18 and Acts 11. 23 ; of beholding, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, and of cleaving to Him with purpose of heart. In its final analysis, our part lies in obedience to the commands of our Lord. " If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love ; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love " (verse 10). Here it will be well for us to meditate on 2 Peter 1. 5 to 8 :

" And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue ; and to virtue knowledge ; and to knowledge temperance ; and to temperance patience ; and to patience godliness ; and to godliness brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."



## THE RESULTS.

We come now to examine the results that flow from established union, and fulfilled conditions, and find them to be threefold.

*(a) Answered prayer (verse 7)*

“ If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.” From the manward side, the whole secret of answered prayer is in these words. “ If ye abide in Me,” instinctively, habitually ; “ and My words abide in you ”—not by rapturous experiences, but by practical and daily obedience to them ; our desires will harmonize with His, and our prayers will be moulded along lines that will bring inevitable response from heaven. Stated in other words, the secrets of effectual prayer are mainly four in number : unbroken fellowship (Psa. 66. 18) ; a forgiving spirit (Mark 11. 25) ; confident faith (James 1. 5-7) ; loving obedience (John 14. 15). Given fulfilment of these conditions, prayer is encouraged by promises more numerous and more absolute, than attach to any other one act and privilege of the believer’s life. God’s universal terms are peculiarly associated with it—“ all ”, “ any ”, “ every ”, “ whosoever ”, “ whatsoever ”, and other such words, make clear His purpose to answer true prayer. Shall we take a few illustrations from holy writ : Abraham’s servant prays, and Rebekah appears (Gen. 24) ; Jacob prays, and his brother’s wrath is appeased (Gen. 32) ; Moses prays, and the rock pours forth its waters (Ex. 17) ; Joshua prays, and the traitor is discovered (Josh. 7) ; Hannah prays, and Samuel is born (1 Sam. 1) ; Samuel prays, and the Philistines are

conquered (1 Sam. 7) ; Nehemiah prays, and the king's heart is softened (Neh. 2) ; Elijah prays, and the torrents descend (James 5. 17-18) ; Daniel prays, and the dream is revealed (Dan. 2) ; Paul prays, and the prison doors are opened (Acts 16).

These records of answered prayer are taken from bygone centuries. Let us now mention some recent ones. Chaplain Johnson was serving his men on an island in the South Pacific. On a certain occasion he accompanied his men in a bombing raid on Japanese-occupied islands several hundred miles away. The operation was a complete success. On the homeward course their plane began to lose altitude and the engines seemed to give out. They landed safely, however, on a certain island ; but shortly after landing learned that the enemy was just half a mile distant from them in each direction, yet, strange to say, their landing had not been observed. The staff sergeant came to him and said, " Chaplain, you have been telling us for months of the need of praying and believing God to answer in time of great trouble, and that He does it right away. Now it is your chance to prove what you have been preaching. We're out of gas (petrol) : base several hundred miles away . . . and almost surrounded by Japs ! " Johnson listened seriously. Slipping away to a quiet spot he began to give himself to prayer. Throughout the afternoon he remained on his knees, pleading the promises and believing for God's deliverance. Night came and the crew slept on the ground. Johnson, however, continued to pray. About 2 a.m. the staff sergeant was strangely aroused from his slumber, and, walking to the water's edge, discovered, to his amazement, a metal flat which had drifted upon

the beach—a barge, on which were fifty barrels of high octane gasoline. In a few hours the crew reached their home base safely. An investigation later revealed that the skipper of a U.S. tanker, finding his ship in submarine-infested waters, had his gasoline cargo removed so as to eliminate the danger of a terrific explosion in the event of a torpedo hit. He placed his barrels on barges, and sent them adrift at a spot some 600 miles from the island on which Johnson and his plane crew were forced to land. Surely the divine Hand had navigated one of these barges through wind and current, and beached it fifty steps from the stranded men.

Mr. Spurgeon once came to Bristol. He was to preach in the three largest Baptist chapels in the city, and he hoped to collect three hundred pounds, which were needed immediately for his orphanage. He got the money. Retiring to bed on the last night of his visit, Spurgeon heard a voice, which, to him, was the voice of the Lord, saying, "Give those three hundred pounds to George Muller". "But, Lord," answered Spurgeon, "I need it for my dear children in London". Again came the word, "Give those three hundred pounds to George Muller". It was only when he had said, "Yes, Lord, I will," that sleep came to him. The following morning he made his way to Muller's Orphanages, and found George Muller on his knees before an open Bible, praying. The famous preacher placed his hand on his shoulder and said: "George, God has told me to give you these three hundred pounds". "Oh," said Muller, "dear Spurgeon, I have been asking the Lord for that very sum". And those two prayerful men rejoiced together. Spurgeon returned to London. On his desk, there he found a

letter awaiting him. He opened it—to find it contained three hundred guineas ! “ There,” cried he with joy, “ the Lord has returned my three hundred pounds with three hundred shillings interest ”.

The following further illustration is quoted to remind us that while the injunction is to let our requests be made known unto God (Phil. 4. 6), we are not enjoined to tell Him *how* He is to answer these requests. A gentleman recovering from an illness was recuperating in the country at a spot amongst the hills where was a lake on which he found pleasure in sailing. One day, when out on the lake, the breeze which had been carrying him nicely along, suddenly ceased, and continued so for a considerable time. Being desirous, at length, of getting back to the shore, and not having sufficient physical strength to row there, he asked the Lord to send the breeze again. But no breeze came. But did no answer come? How was it then that a heavenly messenger, in human form, put out from the shore in a rowing boat, and reaching the becalmed sailing boat, attached the two together with a rope and towed it quickly to land? The lesson is obvious.

So also is it with prayer in relation to the special theme of these discourses of our Lord : the possibility of having an untroubled heart amidst the sorrows and trials that ever and anon beset us as we pass through this world. “ Trust in Him at all times ; ye people, pour out your heart before Him : God is a refuge for us ” (Psa. 62. 8).

“ Come ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish,  
Come to the mercy-seat, fervently kneel ;  
Here bring your wounded hearts, here tell your anguish,  
Earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal.”

*(b) Abounding fruitfulness (verse 8)*

“ Herein is My Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit ”—fruit which is to remain (verse 16). What is fruit ? It is the exhibition in Christian conduct of the spirit and example of the Lord Jesus Christ ; those Christlike characteristics and habits which are set forth in the ninefold cluster of Gal. 5. 22-23. “ Compressed into these nine exquisite graces,” says Miss Ruth Paxson, “ is a marvellous word-picture of the character of the Lord Jesus, in its essential beauty, symmetry, and perfection. Such character can never be produced through human effort ; for it is not the product of human nature, but the fruit of the divine nature. As, without the sun, the photographic image cannot be imprinted on the sensitized film, so, apart from the Holy Spirit, the moral glories of the Lord Jesus can never become ours in any sense, save that of desire.”

In verse 10 our Lord speaks of His commandments—plural ; and in verse 12, of His commandment—singular. All His commandments are summed up in the one—“ to love ”. “ This is My commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.” For, as D. L. Moody has pointed out, the words which delineate the lovely traits of character set forth in Galatians chapter 5, are but various forms of love. Thus, joy is love exulting ; peace is love in repose ; long-suffering is love enduring ; kindness is love in society ; goodness is love in action ; faithfulness is love on the battlefield ; meekness is love at school ; self-control is love in training.

Miss Ada R. Habershon says that the baptism with the Spirit is essential *for* all ; that the filling of the

Spirit is possible *to* all ; and that the fruit of the Spirit is expected *from* all.

(c) *Abiding joy (verses 9 to 11)*

“ These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” Joy is one of Heaven's golden gifts. It is a fruit : the unconscious ripple of a life of which the Spirit of God has control. It is the flag which floats over the palace of the heart when the King is in residence.

*It is fed from unseen sources.* There is a crystal lake, lying in placid beauty among the Western hills, from which a constant stream flows out, but no compensating stream flows in. And yet it is always full. Looking at it from the shore you would predict that it would soon be empty ; but when you push out towards its centre, you see a great spring bubbling up from beneath, with unfailing supplies. Thus there are some lives into which flow no earthly streams of joy ; and yet their cup is always running over. They are like a spring of water, whose waters fail not (Isa. 58. 11).

*It can co-exist with sorrow.* Our Lord is spoken of as a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (Isa. 53. 3) ; but He is also spoken of as One Who was anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows (Psa. 45. 7). The greatest of all sufferers was the most joyful of men. So was it with the apostles : they were sorrowful, yet always rejoicing (2 Cor. 6. 10). In the eighteenth century, Methodist John Nelson was imprisoned in a filthy, evil-smelling hole for the crime of preaching the Gospel. Yet here is what he says : “ My soul was as a watered garden, and I could sing praises to God all day long. For He turned my captivity into joy, and

gave me to rest as well on the boards as if I had been on a bed of down." It is like the hot geyser which comes from unknown depths into an ice-bound world.

*It is independent of personal temperament.* We are not all so highly favoured of Nature as was Billy Bray, of whom his biographer says that "it seemed natural to him to leap and dance, and to caper for joy; for he seemed as free from care, as frolicsome, as gay, as gladsome, as a young lamb dancing in the meadow". But this joy is also for Peter the impulsive, Philip the sceptic, John the ardent, James the choleric, Thomas the constitutionally pessimistic; it is for all who love the Lord, and are obedient to His words (verses 9-11).

*Finally, it is one of the most winsome qualities of Christian character.* The very word "joy" has a charm about it for everybody. It stands for something which everyone likes, and weary-hearted men and women are instinctively attracted to one whose joy is full.

CHAPTER XVIII  
THE CHRISTIAN'S  
RELATION TO HIS FELLOW-CHRISTIANS  
(John 15. 12-17)

WE pass from the consideration of the life of Christ in His members, to think of the love of Christ to His friends, and of their love for one another. For, as Canon Bernard points out, healthful vitality and productive energy are not the whole of life. "A main part of our nature lies blank and barren, without the genial warmth and mutual play of the affections." It is so naturally; it is so spiritually. The one all-embracing principle that should regulate our fellowship with one another, is *love*; because if you love a person you will not only do that person no ill; you will seek every opportunity to express your affection for him (John 15. 12, 13; Rom. 12. 10; 13. 10; 1 John 3. 16).

And now, our Lord indicates that a change has taken place in the relationship in which He stood to His disciples. Hitherto they had rendered to Him the blind, unquestioning obedience of the servant who knows nothing of his master's purposes; henceforward they are to pass from such unintelligent servitude, to the happy co-operation of loving and informed friendship. "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you" (verse 15).

On the lower level of the Christian life, obedience is



based on the obligations of servanthood; on the higher level it rests in the constraint of love. "It is," says someone, "as when a merchant, who has long employed his son as a clerk in the business, calls him into the office and says, 'You are to be taken into the firm. Henceforth I call you not an employee but a partner. But first let me tell you about the business; its assets and liabilities, with the outlook for the future. I propose to keep nothing back from you. You are now taken into my confidence. The business is mine and yours from this day'." Just as Abraham (Gen. 18. 17) and Moses (Ex. 33. 11) became the confidants of Jehovah about His future purposes, so is it with the man who fears the Lord (Psa. 25. 14); the man who is righteous in practice (Prov. 3. 32). "He made known His *ways* unto Moses, His *acts* unto the children of Israel" (Psa. 103. 7). The people could see only the outward happenings—God's acts; Moses was in the inner secret of Jehovah's plans and purposes—the reasons which lay behind these acts. God called Abraham His *friend* (Isa. 41. 8); the Lord Jesus calls us His *friends* (John 15. 15).

It is very fine, in human affairs, when one's master is also one's friend; but with a true man the privilege of friendship in such a case, does not invalidate the obligations of service. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (verses 13 and 14). He loved us even unto His death; nevertheless He is still our Master, and still has the right to command. He commands though He is our Friend; He is our Friend though He commands; and the recognition, on our side, of Him as Master, is

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continued obedience to His commands. It should be noted that John's gospel speaks of four relationships : Disciples (2. 2) ; Servants (13. 16) ; Friends (15. 15) ; Brethren (20. 17).

He reminds us that ours is " the ordination of the pierced hand " (verse 16) ; He speaks again of abiding fruitfulness, and answered prayer (verse 16) ; and, once more commands us to love one another (verse 17).

CHAPTER XIX  
THE CHRISTIAN'S  
RELATION TO THE WORLD  
(John 15. 18-27)

LEAVING the verses on which we have been meditating (John 15. 12 to 17) for those which are to engage us now, makes us conscious of passing from an atmosphere of love, into one of hate. Union with Christ (verses 1 to 11) leads inevitably to communion with one another (verses 12 to 17), and just as inevitably to disunion with the world (verses 18 to 27).

We are *hated by the world* (verses 18 and 19). The antagonism is deep, fundamental, perpetual. The hatred manifested by the world is irrational ; and, since they hated the Master without a cause, His servants need not expect to escape (verses 20, 25). Our main concern, however, should be, not the anger of men that shall die, nor of the sons of men whose existence has been compared to the grass of the field for brevity (Isa. 51. 12, Psa. 103. 15-16) ; but to see that we give them no just cause for their anger.

We shall be *persecuted in the world* (verses 20-25). For those who thus suffer, the words of Hebrews chapter 11 are laden with comfort. We read there of servants of God who were tortured, and who refused to accept deliverance (verse 35). Those, who had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings ; yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments ; who were stoned, sawn asunder, slain of the sword, destitute, afflicted, tormented, are des-

cribed simply as "others" (verses 36 and 37). Their names are not recorded in the proud annals of the world's empires; but they are written in the Lamb's book of life. Men deemed them unworthy of a place in the world; God says that the world was not worthy of them (verse 38). On the invisible tombstones of these patient sufferers and victorious confessors is inscribed this epitaph by the Spirit of God: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (verse 13). Nor is the noble record yet closed. Scattered throughout the world to-day, are faithful-hearted men and women, who suffer ignominy, persecution, and are prepared to face even death itself. Should a similar privilege ever be offered to us, may we not be found wanting, but quit ourselves like men.

The closing words of this section describe us as *witnesses to the world* (verses 26, 27). "In travelling a few years ago," says a Christian gentleman, "I stopped at a hotel where the apartments were of the finest, and where the service was the best I had ever known. The proprietor has a chain of hotels, and is considered the most successful man in the business. Behind the desk of each employee, but hidden from the public view, hangs a little sign with these words: 'My reputation is in your hands'." The words on the little sign are practically what the Lord Jesus says, when He calls us to be His witnesses in a world which has rejected Him; and, in this connection, there are two words in the Gospels which show how we may effectively discharge the sacred task that has been entrusted to us.

These words are found in the two accounts of the deliverance of the demoniac of Gadara. The Gadarenes had banished the Master from their coasts, and the emancipated man earnestly desired to go with Him. But the Master, although personally rejected, wanted to leave there a witness to His power; and so He denied the healed demoniac's request. In Luke 8. 38-39 the poor but happy man is bidden to return to his home "and *shew* how great things" God had done unto him. In Mark 5. 18-19 he is counselled to go home to his friends "and *tell* them how great things the Lord" had done for him. "Go home and shew"—that is the testimony of the *life*—what we are. "Go home and tell"—that is the testimony of the *lip*—what we say. These two forms of witnessing for Christ are complementary, and are illustrated outstandingly in the history of Stephen, who worthily gave the double witness. Because of what he was (Acts 6. 5) his face shone (Acts 6. 15); and when he spoke, he was irresistible (Acts 6. 10). Because of what he was, and of what he said, he suffered (Acts 7. 54 to 60); but he suffered so triumphantly, that a young man named Saul (verse 58), was, so many commentators think, led to Christ as a consequence.

(a) *The witness of the life*—what we are. "Return to thine own house, and shew how great things God hath done unto thee." In Matthew 5. 13-14 we are compared to salt and light: two things which, though silent in action, are great in effect. A lovely illustration of how these things work out in actual practice came to the writer recently, and we reproduce it. A great preacher closed his sermon with an earnest and eloquent

Gospel appeal. Among the score or more who responded, was a lady of wealth and social distinction. She asked permission to say a few words to the audience. "I want you to know," she said, "just why I came forward to-night. It was not because of any word spoken by the preacher. I stand here because of the influence of a little woman who sits before me. Her fingers are rough with toil; the hard work of many years has stooped her low; she is just a poor, obscure washer-woman, who has served in my home for many years. I have never known her to become impatient, to speak an unkind word, or to do a dishonourable deed. I know of countless little acts of unselfish love that adorn her life. Shamefacedly, let me say that I have openly sneered at her faith, and laughed at her fidelity to God. Yet, when my little girl was taken away, it was this little woman who caused me to look beyond the grave and shed my first tear of hope. The sweet magnetism of her life has led me to Christ. I covet the thing that has made her life so beautiful."

At the request of the minister, the little woman was led forward, her eyes streaming with glad tears, and such a shining face as one seldom sees on this earth. "Let me introduce you," said he, "to the real preacher of the evening", and the great audience rose in silent, though not tearless, respect. This charming story, of that humble little washer-woman, recalls the words of the poet :

" Not merely in the words you say,  
 Not only in your deeds confessed,  
 But in the most unconscious way  
 Is Christ expressed.

“ Is it a beatific smile ?  
A holy light upon your brow ?  
Oh no ! I felt His presence while  
You laughed just now.

“ For me 'twas not the truth you taught,  
To you so clear, to me still dim,  
But when you came to me you brought  
A sense of Him.

“ And from your eyes He beckons me,  
And from your heart His love is shed,  
Till I lose sight of you—and see  
The Christ instead.”

(b) *The witness of the lip*—what we say. One great value of the spoken testimony is that it pledges, or at least it should, a speaker to be careful that his life is consistent with his words, otherwise he could be suitably reminded of Emerson's saying : “ What you *are*, speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you *say* ”. Our motto should ever be : “ Not with our lips only, but with our lives ”. Illustrating this point, Dr. Jowett tells of the sandwich men whom he saw on a street in the great city, advertising “ the best dinner in all London ”. They looked starved and emaciated men, telling other people of food and where to get it ! The outstanding example of this in holy writ is Lot. Away, as he was, from the place of fellowship with God, he “ vexed his righteous soul from day to day ” because of what he saw going on around him—that is to say, he lost his *joy* (2 Peter 2. 8) ; and when he sought to warn his relatives of their impending doom, “ he seemed as one that mocked unto them ”—that is to say, he lost his *testimony* (Gen. 19. 14).

CHAPTER XX  
PERSECUTION PREDICTED  
(John 16. 1-4)

**O**NE of the characteristics of Christianity is that our Lord never tries to enlist recruits by rosy pictures of the blessing and joy of serving Him. He makes it quite clear that, although those who follow Him wholly shall have inward joys that are unspeakable, and heart peace that passeth understanding, their outward life, like His own, would be one of trial ; that it is through much tribulation they would enter the kingdom of God.

In earlier chapters of the gospel of John we read that " the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue " (chapter 9. 22) ; and that this had a deterrent effect on many who acknowledged His claims. " Among the chief rulers also many believed on Him ; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue " (chapter 12. 42). Our Lord now plainly warns His disciples that this was just what would happen to them. " They shall put you out of the synagogues : yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service " (verse 2). These two things—excommunication and death—have been encountered again and again by Christian witnesses down the centuries. " Expulsion from the synagogue was," says Swete, " the most serious punishment that the spiritual power in Judea could inflict. The synagogue



was not merely a place of religious assembly, but the centre of the life of the local Jewish community ; and the excommunicated Jew was cut off, not only from the ordinances of his religion, but from the society of his people, and practically reduced to the position of a Gentile." Saul of Tarsus is an example of one who persecuted Christians to the death. He looked with approval on the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7. 58); and he gave his vote when other witnesses were slain (Acts 26. 9-11). When Saul of Tarsus became Paul the apostle, he himself suffered similar persecution ; and there were occasions in his life when, but for divine intervention, he, too, would have been slain.

CHAPTER XXI  
THE EXPEDIENCY  
OF CHRIST'S DEPARTURE

(John 16. 5-7)

“ **I**T is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you ” (verse 7).

His departure was a necessity and an indispensable pre-requisite to fuller blessing. Acts, chapter 1, records the ascent of our Lord to heaven ; Acts, chapter 2, records the descent of the Spirit of God to earth ; and the presence of the Spirit in the Church was the proof that the Lord Jesus had been glorified (Acts 2. 33 ; John 7. 37-39).

When Nansen started on his Arctic expedition, he took with him a carrier pigeon, strong and fleet of wing. After two years of desolation in Arctic regions, he one day wrote a tiny message, tied it under the pigeon's wing, and let the bird loose to travel two thousand miles to Norway. He took the trembling little bird, and flung her up from the ship into the icy air. Three circles she made, and then straight as an arrow she shot south, travelling over ice and sea ; and at last, wonderful to relate, dropped into the very lap of the explorer's wife. By the bird's arrival, she knew that all was well in the dark night of the frozen North. It was precisely so with the coming of the Heavenly Dove. There was thus for the disciples a loss and a gain ; but the loss itself was a gain. “ The withdrawal of the visible

presence of Jesus was, for the disciples, salutary progress and advance. It was the end of the tutelage which would have kept them children, and the removal of a veil that would have kept them carnal. It belongs to human nature in childhood, or in stages analogous to childhood, to be formed by external supervision, and in maturity to be set free from it ; and there is a time when prolonged supervision would not promote, but arrest, maturity. The time had come when it was better for these disciples to pass out of the first stage of discipline into one which would test the principles and powers they had gained—one in which service, loyalty, and love, would be strengthened by more independent exercise, when obedience of sight would become obedience of faith. It was good for them to be *with* Jesus ; it was better to prove that they *had been* with Him. Even in this sense it was expedient for them that He should go away.”

The Spirit knows no limitations of time, or place, or language (Psa. 139. 7-10) ; and so the expediency of our Lord’s departure is further seen in that His spiritual presence would be nearer, His Godhead clearer, His salvation surer, His Church richer, His Heaven dearer.

CHAPTER XXII  
THE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT  
(John 16. 8-15)

THE Spirit of God came to earth to achieve certain purposes in the world, and in the Church. His work in the world is described by one word—*conviction* (verses 8 to 11). His work in the Church is also described by one word—*illumination* (verses 12 to 15).

(a) *His work in the world* is in relation to three fundamental issues: sin, righteousness, judgment. These form the domain of conscience, and involve the present and eternal interests of mankind. "The Spirit is to show the truth in the case in all these respects; and the words which describe His witness are adapted to the situation in each particular, and correspond to thoughts immediately present at the time. That of the *unbelief* of the nation (verse 9), weighs heavily on Christ's mind, as expressed in the sad conclusion—John 12. 37 to 50; and accentuated in words just spoken—chapter 15. 22 to 25. That of *departure to God* and withdrawal from human eyes (verse 10), is the ground-thought of this whole discourse. That of *the judgment of Satan* (verse 11), has come strongly into view, as shown by the last words in the Temple (chapter 12. 31). These three facts—*in earth, in heaven, in hell*, the Spirit will use in order to convict the world by the revelation which they make on sin, righteousness, and judgment."

(b) *His work in the Church* is also clearly described ; but before we examine it, let us quote the following valuable note by the late Dr. John Ker on verse 12 (“ I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now ”): “ The principle on which Christ conducts His teaching is that the full greatness of a truth is not unveiled until the eye has been strengthened, and a hope is not shattered until its compensation has been provided. It is because He is the Educator, Who in nature lets the blossoms fall only when the fruit forms, and suffers the leaves of last autumn to remain on trees whose young buds need shelter. . . . There are in the teaching of Christ, both in the Bible and in providence, reticences and pauses which temper the truth to feeble minds as clouds chasten light.” He promises, however, that “ when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth . . . and He will shew you things to come ” (verse 13). The idea is that of gradual, gentle, progressive leading. He guides by unfolding the truth, by enlightening the understanding, quickening desires, stimulating the inward graces, and thus translating the truth from doctrine to life, and from perception to experience. From verse 13, therefore, we learn that Christ’s teaching was designedly incomplete ; but that presently they would have a completed revelation and an inward Teacher.

But the great aim of the Spirit’s ministry, and the keynote of all His teaching was to centre in this—*that He should glorify Christ*. “ He shall glorify Me : for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you ” (verse 14). How is this to be ? Suppose you are in a dark room, on the wall of which hangs a portrait of

your father, whom you never saw in the flesh. So long as the room is dark, it is all the same to you as if there were no portrait of your father there; but open a shutter and see what the effect will be. Through the opening comes a beam of light. What has the beam of light to say? It has come from a distant world, many times greater than the one in which you live: what has this swift-winged messenger to tell of that wonderful world so far away? Nothing. It speaks not of itself: it only takes your father's features and shows them unto you.

“He shall glorify Me.” “Has this been done? How amply, how fully, we see for ourselves as we turn to the apostolic writings, Jesus Christ shines forth in every page, in lofty testimonies, adoring ascriptions, doctrinal expositions, and practical pleadings. He was glorified at first in the faith once for all delivered to the saints, so that He has been ever since in the creeds and confessions, the liturgies and doxologies, the hymns and celebrations of the whole Church; and at the same time, by the trust and the love, the confidence and devotion, the labours and martyrdoms of believers in all ages—a great multitude which no man can number of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues. Thus, in fact, has the Spirit glorified the Lord Jesus in the Scriptures, in the Church, and in the souls of men.”

CHAPTER XXIII  
SORROW TURNED INTO JOY  
(John 16. 16-24)

FROM the great subjects on which He has been dwelling, Christ turns to His hearers, to prepare their minds for the changes so close at hand. The historical and immediate fulfilment of verses 16 to 22 is seen in the double effect of Christ's cross upon His servants. For part of three dark and desolate days it was the occasion of their sorrow, their dejection, their despair; and then, with amazing suddenness, the glorious fact of the resurrection burst upon them. That which had been the occasion for their overwhelming anguish, for their apparently hopeless despair, suddenly became the occasion for an unspeakably rapturous and abiding joy. The cross of Christ, which meant suffering, sorrow and shame for the Son of God, far beyond anything which the human mind can comprehend, has ever since been the centre of the deepest gladness and confidence of countless generations.

Verses 23 and 24 present a cluster of jewels. *Questionings ended*—"In that day ye shall ask Me nothing". *Desires satisfied*—"Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you". *Joy completed*—"Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full". That promise is large in its scope, clear in its terms, unfailing in its issues.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### CHRIST'S FINAL MESSAGE

(John 16. 25-33)

**J**OHAN 16. 25 speaks of clearer teaching ; verse 26, of heavenly intercession ; and verse 27, of boundless love. " God so loved the world "—that is the love of compassion (chapter 3. 16). " The Father Himself loveth you "—that is the love of complacency (chapter 16. 27). In verse 28, we have a summary of the mission undertaken by the Lord Jesus. " I am come forth from the Father "—there, you have the Nativity and the Incarnation ; " and am come into the world,"—there, the whole of His sinless Life ; " again, I leave the world "—by way of the Cross ; " and go to the Father "—ascension into Glory. It is a statement that is equalled in the New Testament, only by Philippians 2. 5 to 11. With that comprehensive affirmation His words are ended, His teaching is completed.

The remaining verses are a summing up of what would be the experiences of Christian disciples to the end of time. The clouds were gathering, and the storm was about to break on His sacred head. The disciples had assured Him of their intelligence and of their faith (verses 29 and 30) ; but He sorrowfully tells them that " they will return every man of them to his own home, and forsake Him in His hour of greatest need. As a perfect and sinless Man, He was exquisitely sensitive to sympathy ; and yet He loved them, though



they denied Him that human fellowship which His heart craved " (verses 31 and 32).

" These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation : but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world " (verse 33). When Dr. John Brown, the kindly physician of Edinburgh, lay dying, a lady visited him one day after attending church, and he asked her what had been the text. She told him that it was, " In the world ye shall have tribulation : but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world ". " Wonderful words," he said, folding his hands and closing his eyes ; he repeated slowly : " Be of good cheer ". Then, after a pause : " And from *Him*, our Saviour ! " It should be noted that our Lord uses the expression " be of good cheer " three times : Matthew 9. 2 ; 14. 27 ; John 16. 33. The first is the good cheer of His pardon ; the second, of His presence ; and the third, of His peace.

But our wonderful verse has a threefold message.

(a) *Inward peace*. " These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace." Peace embraces all that constitutes rest, contentment, and true happiness. Our infirmities and sins may interrupt and agitate the surface ; but deep down in the heart, as in the ocean, peace remains.

(b) *Outward tribulation*. " In the world ye shall have tribulation." Peace and tribulation concur in the same experience, belonging to different spheres in our complex humanity. The world presses from without ; Christ dwells within, and gives His peace to the inward man.

(c) *Cheerful confidence.* "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." The word means "take heart", "be confident". It is both an exhortation and a promise. "The word has been reserved to the last moment. Jesus spoke nothing prematurely. Only when the end comes, does He conclude His teaching in the flesh with a final saying, which might breathe courage and confidence into the disciples whom He leaves, and into those who, in all generations, should believe on Him through their testimony. So it is provided that *the last word of the last discourse* shall sound the note of victory for ever: 'BE OF GOOD CHEER; I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD'" (Phil. 4. 13; 2 Cor. 12. 9; Rom. 8. 35-39; Rev. 3. 11).

CHAPTER XXV  
THE HOLY OF HOLIES  
(John 17)

**T**HOSE who have studied the typology of the Bible will have no difficulty in recognizing in the gospel of John the spiritual equivalents of what were found in the three courts of the Tabernacle of old. Chapters 1 to 12 correspond to the outer court. This section begins and ends with the thought of the Lamb of God in atonement (chapters 1. 29 ; 12. 32-33). Chapter 13 introduces the Laver, the use of which being necessary before one could enter into the Holy Place. Chapters 14 to 16 set forth the Lampstand (chapter 14. 26) ; Prayer in His name (chapter 15. 16) ; and the Altar of Incense (chapter 16. 14-15). Chapter 17 shows the High Priest alone in the holiest of all ; chapters 18 and 19 depict Christ suffering without the gate ; chapters 20 and 21 portray the risen and glorified Christ. We are now to listen to the Great High Priest while He tabernacled among us, pleading for His own " within the veil ".

This heavenly prayer has been the treasure of His people in every age ; sounding to us like the silver bells on the high priest's garment, which told the people that he was still living and pleading for them in the holiest of all. Philip Melancthon says that " there is no voice which has ever been heard, either in heaven or in earth, more exalted, more holy, more fruitful, more sublime, than this prayer offered up by the Son of God Himself ".

He speaks amidst the things of time with the voice of eternity. John chapter 17 is the charter of our hopes, the assurance of those things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, but which are now revealed to us by His Spirit. The chapter carries mind and heart to the ultimate of spiritual contemplation attainable here below. In simplicity and depth, in grandeur and fervour, it stands unparalleled in the literature of the world. It embraces all that concerns us here and hereafter, from redemption to glory. It winds up the whole of His past ministry, and forms the point of transition to the dark scenes which immediately follow.

Beginning with the prayer for Himself (verses 1 to 5), our Lord passes at verse 6 into prayer for His immediate disciples ; and at verse 20, for all those who, down the Christian centuries, would believe on His name.

CHAPTER XXVI  
CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR HIMSELF  
(John 17. 1-5)

THE unifying thought that runs through the prayer is the glory of the Father through the accomplishment by the Son of His redemptive work on earth—that work by means of which a new relationship between man and God was made possible. The tone of it is not that of a suppliant pleading, but that of a companion expressing his desires. “These words spake Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said : ‘Father, the hour is come ; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee ’ ” (verse 1).

The hour is come—the hour contemplated in the counsels of eternity ; foreshadowed in type and prediction ; waited for by saints and prophets. The petition for the glorification of the Son finds explanation in John 10. 15-18. He now prays that the Son may be glorified in carrying out that programme on which hangs the destiny of man, and the glory of God. Eternal life was imparted to all who were the Father's gift (verse 2) ; and the Son's choice (chapter 15. 16).

“And this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent ” (verse 3). “Knowledge of God ” in the Scriptures means not merely intellectual conviction, but a living, conscious, possession of fellowship with Him. Eternal life is not merely life indefinitely prolonged. It is, rather, life under new conditions, and

fed from different sources. It can be entered upon now, although a full understanding of it is at present impossible. "That I may know *Thee*" was the passionate cry of one of the greatest of the Old Testament saints (Ex. 33. 13); "that I may know *Him*" was the equally passionate yearning of one of the greatest of the New Testament saints (Phil. 3. 10).

"I have glorified Thee on the earth" (verse 4). There is no consciousness of flaw or failure expressed in these words, and no mere man would dare to use them. Rather is the language of the holiest men and women, that of Luke 17. 10: "We are unprofitable servants". "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (verse 4). Again, the words contrast with the utterances of men. "So little accomplished, so much to be done," cried one of our great empire builders, at the close of his life. "A broken column is the fit monument of many lives: unfinished, frustrated, useless. Wasted energy, ill-repaired blunders, unfulfilled purposes, fruitless years, much that is positively evil, much that was done mechanically, and carelessly, and for the day: plans ill-conceived and worse executed; imperfect ideals of life imperfectly realized; pursuits dictated by uneducated tastes, unchastened whims, accidental circumstances: such is the retrospect which many have as they look back over life."

"And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine Own Self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (verse 5). These words link immediately with 2 Corinthians 8. 9, which summarizes the theme of the verses before us now: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was

rich . . .”—there, is His pre-incarnate wealth, the glory which He had with His Father before the world was. “ Yet for your sakes He became poor ”—so poor, that when He was born, His mother had to avail herself of the provision which the Law made for the poor (Lev. 12. 6-8). Unable to afford a lamb when she brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord, Mary offered two turtledoves (Luke 2. 22-24). So poor, that in life He frequently had no place to lay His head (Luke 9. 58). So poor, that when He died they placed Him in a borrowed tomb (John 19. 41). “ That ye through His poverty might be rich ”—there, is the illimitable wealth which now is ours in Him ; wealth which the apostle describes in four words : “ *All things are yours* ” (1 Cor. 3. 21). He stooped from heaven to earth, in order that, by His redemptive sacrifice, He might raise us from earth to heaven.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR HIS OWN

(John 17. 6-24)

**A**LTHOUGH Christ had been rejected by His own nation (John 1. 11), there were individuals in that nation who did receive Him (John 1. 12); and the verses which follow, are mainly occupied with His presentation to God of a series of five ascending petitions on their behalf. These petitions are for the infusion of special graces, rather than for the removal of defects. A note of triumph resounds through the prayer. One can but touch the fringe of this continent of gold.

Before we consider them, one thing should be noted. Because our Lord says in verse 9, "I pray not for the world", it has been erroneously concluded that He is now indifferent to the needs of the human race; but that is not so. "On the contrary," says Dr. Campbell Morgan, "His interest in His disciples was a proof of His larger interest in all those who had refused Him. He knew that this group of men, in whom He, by the Spirit, would dwell, would carry on His enterprises, and through their witness, those in darkness would yet be brought into the light. His prayer for them, therefore, was not one of indifference to the need of the world, but rather one born of abiding love for the world, which sought the perfecting of the instruments through which He might reach the world."



*The five petitions.*

(1) *For their preservation* : “ And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are ” (verse 11). “ Christ’s removal from the earthly and visible life involved a great change in the condition of the disciples. Hitherto He had been present with them day by day, always exhibiting to them spiritual glory, and attracting them to it in His own person. So long as they saw God’s glory in so attractive and friendly a form it was not difficult for them to resist the world’s temptations. They felt how divine and overcoming a love this was ; they adored the name ‘ Father ’, which Christ the Son had made known to them ; they felt themselves akin to God and claimed by Him, and spurned the world ; they recognized that they possessed in themselves the capacity to understand and be appealed to by such a love as God’s. It is the knowledge of those abiding realities which Christ revealed, of those great and loving purposes of God to man, and of the certainty of their fulfilment which calls us to holiness and to God. There is reality here ; all else is empty and delusive.”

(2) *For their emancipation* : “ I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil ” (verse 15). The word “ evil ” represents moral evil, as its use in Matthew 6. 13 and Mark 7. 23 clearly indicates. It is sometimes translated “ evil one ” (R.V. Marg.; Weymouth ; Phillips). There is in this world an unseen foe who is ever seeking our enslavement (Job 1. 7 ;

1 Peter 5. 8) ; and the injunction based upon that fact is found in such words as Galatians 5. 1 ; John 8. 36. It is well to remember the old saying : " The price of liberty is eternal vigilance " .

In this chapter we are described as bearing a seven-fold relationship to the world : out of the world—verse 6 ; in the world—verse 11 ; not of the world—verse 14 ; hated by the world—verse 14 ; kept from the world—verse 15 ; sent into the world—verse 18 ; witnessing to the world—verses 20, 21. Our deliverance from the world is to be maintained, not by the removal of the body, but by the reinforcement by the Spirit ; not by changing our locality, but by changing the heart. We are to be in the world as the Gulf Stream is in the Atlantic. The great stream is in the ocean, but is not of the ocean (verse 16).

(3) *For their sanctification* : " Sanctify them through Thy truth : Thy word is truth " (verse 17). Kept from the evil (verse 15)—that is negative ; sanctified through the truth—that is positive. We are set apart for God ; and the supreme essential for the fulfilment of the task for which we are thus set apart, is holiness of life. " Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord " was the command in the old dispensation : it is equally the command for to-day. The instrument which the Spirit uses in our practical sanctification is the Word of the Lord (Psa. 119. 11) ; that Word, by which a young man cleanses his way (Psa. 119. 9) ; that Word, the speaking of which cleansed the disciples (John 15. 3) ; that Word, which cleanses and sanctifies the Church collectively (Eph. 5. 25-26). Two results follow this use of the Word by the Spirit—power and liberty. In the possession of these we are ready for

the commission contained in verse 18 of the seventeenth chapter of John.

In the whole of this great prayer there are no words more full of comfort for us to-day than this sentence : " Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word " (verse 20). Looking down the vista of the Christian centuries, the Master prayed for you, my reader, and for all who have accepted His salvation ; for all who have believed His disciples' word. And that leads to the next petition on their behalf, namely :

(4) *For their unification* : " That they all may be one ; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us : that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me. And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them ; that they may be one, even as We are one. I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one ; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me " (verses 21-23). It should be noted that it is unity, and not uniformity, for which our Lord pleads. Minds differ—differ in capacity, in quality, in training, in opportunity of development ; and for all these psychological differences, provision has been made in this prayer. Just as, in other spheres, there are many folds but one flock, many waves but one sea, many stars but one radiant sky ; so is it here. " The stars differ from one another in glory," says Joseph Parker ; " but the heavens, of which they form a part, are a unity ; no star holds another star in contempt ; differences in glory do not disturb the unity of the stellar church ". Later on—Ephesians 4. 1-3—Paul clearly indicates how

best this unity may be maintained. If only the lovely graces of Ephesians 4, verse 2 were to characterize us all, what a happy family we would be !

That there are difficulties in the way of the practical realization of this, goes without saying. But many of these difficulties will be obviated if we bear in mind that Truth is many-sided. It is like a diamond with many facets. Varying interpretations of the revealed truth of God are perfectly consistent with loyalty to that truth ; and so, " while on all explicit declarations of holy writ there can be no yielding of principle or sacrifice of truth, a vast sphere remains where loving concession and mutual tolerance, not only make a much more powerful Church, but create one of life's sweetest joys ". Any student of Church History well knows that, in times of outward stress and strain, this unity becomes definitely and practically visible. Says Lecky, the historian : " There has probably never existed upon earth a community whose members were bound to one another by a deeper or purer affection, than the Christians in the days of the persecutions ".

In the various little rock-pools on the ocean-shore, small fishes are normally confined to their individual pools. But let one tidal wave sweep the rocks, and lo ! the pool divisions disappear, and these little fellows find that the brotherhood of fishes is a much larger thing than they understood it to be. Should we require to wait for a tidal wave of persecution to enable us to discover the essential unity of all Christians ?

During the American Civil War, the two armies were, on one occasion, encamped on the opposite sides of a river. The band of the Northern army played their national tune and the troops cheered ; then the band

of the Southern army played theirs, and their troops cheered. But at last one of them began to play, *Home, Sweet Home*, and when the song was ended, both armies united in one mighty shout. Let us quote another incident of the American War. After the battle of Gettysburg, a man entered a hospital with a supply of aids and comforts for the wounded, which had been sent from Massachusetts. As he went from bed to bed he enquired : " Any Massachusetts' soldiers here ? " Nobody answered. He continued going round the wards. " Any Massachusetts' soldiers here ? " " No," replied a voice, " only United States' soldiers here ".

May we conclude our consideration of the value of Christian unity by quoting the Accession Service prayer : " O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace : give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great danger we are in by our unhappy divisions. Take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly union and concord : that, as there is but one Body, and one Spirit, and one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all ; so we may henceforth be all of one heart, and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify Thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

(5) *For their glorification* : " Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am ; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me : for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world " (verse 24). These words present a

prospect before which all earthly good, all the world's ambitions and achievements, its prizes and rewards, fade into absolute nothingness. The words are not petition : they state His will : " Father, I *will*. . . ." Apart from this verse, the whole theme of the intercession for His disciples has been concerned with their life in *this* world : this verse alone deals with eternity. " It is right to regard these words of our Lord as the most sacred of all His treasured utterances ; for they contain the ground of our fixed hope, the assurance of our most sublimated desire. Of their inexhaustible meaning the Spirit has conveyed, and still conveys, some measure to the saints and mystics in every age of the Church. Their full significance none can hope yet to know ; but the humblest may rejoice in the confidence that he will know hereafter."

His will is that we should be with Him where He now is—a confirmation of John 14. 3. This includes our physical perfection (Phil. 3. 21, R.V.) ; unclouded spiritual vision (1 John 3. 2) ; and abiding satisfaction of heart (Psa. 17. 15). It means the perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in His eternal and everlasting glory.

" Then we shall be where we would be,  
Then we shall be what we should be,  
Things which are not now, nor could be,  
Then shall be our own."

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### LAST WORDS

(John 17. 25-26)

**A**ND now, in verses 25 and 26, our Lord turns once more from the things of eternity to those of time, and sums up the great intercession in one final word of infinite tenderness and far-reaching significance. “O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee : but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou has sent Me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it : that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” When speaking of Himself He says : “Father ” (verses 1, 5, 21, 24). When speaking of the disciples He says : “Holy Father ” (verses 11). When speaking of the world He says : “Righteous Father ” (verse 25). The adjectives used are full of significance—see 1 Peter 1. 13 to 16 ; Acts 17. 31. The three last words, “I in them ”, confirm that His object throughout was to prepare them for the change over from His presence *with* them to His presence *in* them.

To conclude our meditation on this exceedingly rich portion of the Scriptures, we would quote the words of Canon Bernard : “Comparing the commendatory prayer which we have here attended—John 17, with the prayer in Gethsemane—Matthew 26 ; and the tranquil converse to which we have listened, with the terrible scenes which follow ; we feel the marvel and the majesty of that self-suppression which has secured

these hours of sacred calm for the words of foreseeing love ; and again we own the truth of the opening words: ' When Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world,

HE LOVED THEM UNTO THE END ' ''.