

John Commentary - James Smith - Handfuls of Purpose

John 1:1-5. Christ, the Life and Light of Men
John 1:6-13. How to Become Children,
John 1:14-18. Word Made Flesh, The,
John 1:29-34. John's Testimony of Christ,
John 1:35-42. First Disciples, The,
John 1:43-51. Nathanael's Conversion,
John 2:1-11. First Sign, The
John 2:13-19. Cleansing the Temple,
John 3:1-9. New Birth, The
John 3:14-21. Way of Life, The
John 3:25-36. John's Last Testimony,
John 4:7-14. Living Water, The,
John 4:1-30. Woman of Samaria, The,
John 4:46-54. Faith: Its Nature and Reward,
John 5:1-15. Impotent Man, The,
John 5:17-43. I and My Father,
John 6:1-14. Christ and the Hungry Multitude,
John 6:16-21. Jesus in the Ship Or, INSTANT SALVATION.,
John 6:26-29. Imperishable Meat, The,
John 6:30-40. True Bread, The,
John 7:32-39. Prohibited and Invited, The,
John 8:1-11. Law and Grace,
John 8:12-30. Christ's Testimony Concerning Himself,
John 8:31-54. Christ's Heart-searching "Ifs," ,
John 9. From Darkness to Light
John 10:1-10 The Shepherd,
John 10:11-18 The Good Shepherd,
John 10:22-30 The Safety of the Sheep,
John 11 Lazarus,
John 11 Jesus,
John 12:1-8 A Supper Scene
John 12:20-26 Death, Life, and Service
John 12:44-50 The Light of the World,
John 13:1-17 Christ's Last Token of Love
John 13:21-30 Self-Excommunicated,
John 14:1-4 An Infallible Cure for Heart Trouble
John 14:6-21 Christ and the Father,
John 14:21-24 Love's Reward,
John 15:1-8 Fruit-Bearing,
John 15 Branches, Disciples, Friends,
John 15:12-26 I and You,
John 16:7-15 The Great Helper,
John 16:16-23 A Little While,
John 17 Christ's Gifts to His Own,
John 17 Christ's Petitions for His Own,
John 17 The Christian's Relationship to the World,
John 18:1-11 Revelations in the Garden,
John 18 Christ's Sufferings at the Hands of Men,
John 20:1-18 Mary Magdalene,
John 20:24-29 Doubting Thomas,
John 21:1-14 How Jesus Showed Himself,

CHRIST, THE LIFE AND LIGHT OF MEN. John 1:1-5.

The Gospel of John has been well called "the Gospel of Eternity," for it is the Gospel of God, John was a specially prepared vessel for this very honorable ministry. He had been from his youth a beloved apostle. "His head had rested on the Lord's breast, he had stood beside the Cross, had witnessed the Ascension, had cherished until her death the Mother of the Lord, had seen the Jewish dispensation closed and the Holy City overthrown, and to him the beatific visions of the Apocalypse had been granted." The great purpose of this Gospel is very fittingly expressed in chapter 20:31. "These have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His Name." All the keywords of his Gospel are found in this verse. The opening words of this chapter are among the most profound ever penned by the hand of man. They reveal a three-fold relationship of the Lord Jesus Christ in His—

I. Relationship to God. He is called the Word, the "Logos." Christ Himself is the uttered speech and thought of God. He is the visible expression of the invisible God. "For the life which was with the Father was manifested unto us" (1 John 1:2). This Word was in the beginning. "The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His ways...I was daily His delight" (Proverbs 8:22-30). The Word was with God. Yes, more, the Word was God. Man's finite mind cannot grasp the mystery of the Trinity, but the devout believer can bow and adore. That He who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, should make Himself of no reputation, taking upon Him the form of a servant, and dying on a Cross for the sin of the world, is a mystery of grace that can only be fathomed by the mystery of the Trinity.

II. Relationship to Creation. "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made" (v. 3). Paul taught the same doctrine, "God... created all things by Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:9) It pleased God to bring the old creation into being through the instrumentality of His Son; it has also pleased Him that the new creation should be "in Christ Jesus." By Him He made the worlds (Hebrews 1:2), and by Him He seeks also to redeem this world lost in sin. He by whom God made all things has also made peace by the Blood of His Cross. The Lord Jesus Christ as the Word of God holds the same position towards the new creation as He did to the old. "Without Him was not anything made." Without Him God did nothing, so without Him we can do nothing. All things were created by Him and for Him, and by Him all things consist or hold together. He is the center and support of all, as well as the Maker. "You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for You have created all things, and for Your pleasure they are and were created" (Rev. 4:11). If all things were created for His pleasure, surely He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

III. Relationship to Men. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." Why is the Life spoken of as the light of men, and not of creation? He has made the Light of the material universe, but He is the Light of men. Man is something distinct from and superior to other created things. He is a personality that needs the Divine Personality to meet his every want. "In Him was life." The source of life was in Him, and God, in giving us His Son has given to us eternal life (1 John 5:11). The life manifested in Christ Jesus is the true light which should lighten every man coming into the world. I am come that they might have life. Christ as the Word of God is that living bread which came down from Heaven, that a man may eat and not die. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. Then observe—

1. What this light is—"The life was the light."

2. Where this light shines—"The light shines in darkness." Christ as the Light did not shine on the darkness of the world, but in the darkness. He was made flesh, and dwelt among us. His own words are, "I am come a light into the world" (John 12:46). The purpose of the light is to overcome the darkness. The center of this darkness is the human heart. The God who commanded light to shine out of darkness is He who has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of God (2 Corinthians 4:6).

3. The effect of its shining—"The darkness comprehended it not." Two words are used in the Revised Version—one in the text and the other in the margin—which if taken separately bring out the twofold result of this shining of the true light.

(1) The darkness apprehended it not. The darkness of willful unbelief remained unconscious of the dawning of this new day—"they knew not the time of their visitation" (Luke 19:42-44).

(2) The darkness overcame it not (R.V., margin). Thank God, that in the case of many the darkness of sin and fear was not able to overcome or resist the bright shining of His truth. No matter how dense the darkness is, it cannot in any way overcome the purity or purpose of the light. The light shines on, but men may condemn themselves by loving the darkness rather than the light (John 3:19).

HOW TO BECOME CHILDREN. John 1:6-13.

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John: the same came for a witness." The "True Light" was heralded by a special messenger from Heaven. "Sent from God... for a witness." That is a perfect life which fulfills the purpose of God, although it may be both solitary and brief. It is not necessary that a man should live long, but if his life is not to be a failure it is necessary that he should live to the glory of God. As soon as we become "children of God" by being born anew from above, we enter into that relationship with Him that makes it possible for us to become like John, "a man sent from God... for a witness." Then, how can we become children of God? The answer here is short and simple, "As many as receive Him, to them gives He the right to become children of God" (v. 12, R.V.). No man has the right to be called a child of God who has not received Him. "God has made of one blood all nations," but the blood of nations is not the same as the Blood of Christ. Great emphasis is here put upon the Him whom we are to receive. The act of receiving avails only because it brings us into contact with the One.

I. Who Made the World (v. 10). The world was made by Him. He who made the world can easily remake a human soul. His creative power was manifested, while in the world, by His miraculous works, such as feeding the thousands with a few loaves, and stilling the tempest and the raging waves.

II. Who was in the World (v. 10). Him who made the world, and who humbled Himself to be born into the world in the likeness of sinful flesh, that He might get into personal touch with man's sins and sorrows. In the world but not of it, among sinners but entirely separated from them, in the world as the visible representative of the invisible God.

III. Who is the True Light (v. 9). This is the only light that can possibly "lighten every man coming into the world," because this true light is the life of men. Him who is eternally perfect, with all the perfections of eternity. He is the "true Light," the "true Vine," the "true Bread." He is "the Truth." To receive Him is to receive the light of life.

IV. Who was Rejected by His Own. "The world knew Him not, and His own received Him not" (vv. 10, 11). They knew Him as the Son of Joseph, but as the Son of God they refused to acknowledge Him. Although they lived and moved and had their being in Him, yet they knew Him not. They received with eager ness His daily bounties, but Him they received not. No one could convince Him of sin. No one could find a fault in Him. Yet His own received Him not. The fact that He was first rejected, then accepted by His own kinsfolk is another proof of the divinity of His character. He did the works that none other man could do, and so attested His claims. As many as receive Him must be prepared to suffer reproach with Him.

V. Who has Authority to Make us Children of God. "As many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God" (v. 12, R.V.). This prerogative is His alone. No church privilege or laying on of hands can give any one the right to become a son of God. The Spirit of adoption is the gift of God (Romans 8:15). There is no other way whereby we can become the children of God but through "faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26). Christ came as the sent one of God, to redeem us, that we might receive the adoption of sons (Galatians 4:4, 5). He has the right to adopt because He had the power to redeem. As many as receive Him receive redemption from sin and guilt.

VI. Who has Power to Regenerate the Soul. "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (v. 13). To become a son of God implies regeneration by the Spirit of God. It is not a natural birth—"not of blood." It cannot be produced by any amount of fleshly energy—"nor of the will of the flesh." Neither can it come by the force of intellectual effort—"nor of the will of man." It is of God, and is God's immediate answer to our faith in His Son Jesus Christ. As many as receive Him are born of God. How shall I put you among the children? "Receive Him."

THE WORD MADE FLESH. John 1:14-18.

"The life of man," says Westcott, "is the knowledge of God. But this knowledge lives and moves. It is not a dead thing, embalmed once for all in phrases." The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. This is holy ground. Let us approach as Moses did the burning bush. Here we see a—

I. Mysterious Incarnation. "The Word was made flesh." He who was "with God," and who "was God," has suddenly appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh. How would Elijah have felt if that "still small voice" that spoke so clearly to his heart had mysteriously appeared in the form of flesh and bone? Christ as the Word could not be seen, and the flesh as such could not be heard, but the "Word made flesh" could be both seen and heard. The flesh without the living Word has no message or virtue in it for the sins and sores of this needy world. The union of the Word and the flesh is as much a mystery as the unity of the Trinity. Great is the mystery of godliness: God manifest in the flesh. It was all of grace that Christ took on Him the seed of Abraham instead of the nature of angels. The mystery of the Incarnation is the mystery of grace.

II. Profound Humiliation. "And dwelt among us." It was not a hurried greeting, like an angel's visit. It was the voluntary adoption of Himself into the family of humanity. God, who dwelt in the miraculous "pillar of cloud," and tabernacled with Israel in the wilderness, has now humbled Himself to take the common form of sinful men, and dwell among them. What a stoop, the image of God taking

the likeness of sinful flesh.

III. Divine Manifestation. "No man has seen God at any time: the only begotten Son, ... He has declared Him" (v. 18). He who was "in the bosom of the Father" was well fitted to make such an declaration. In the life of Jesus Christ the character of the "King eternal, immortal, and invisible, . . . whom no man has seen or can see," has been graciously manifested. As "no one knows the Son save the Father, so neither does any one know the Father save the Son, and he to whoever the Son wills to reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27). It takes God the Father to fully apprehend the greatness of the character of God the Son. It takes God the Son to give a perfect declaration of God the Father, and it takes God the Holy Spirit to make man capable of receiving and enjoying such a manifestation. What a revelation is this? "I have manifested Your Name unto the men which You gave Me out of the world" (John 17:6).

IV. Provided Salvation. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us... full of Grace and Truth" (v. 14). "Grace and Truth came by Jesus Christ" (v. 17). The grace of Jesus Christ is the winsomeness and kindness of God, and He is "full" of it. The grace of God which brings salvation to all men, has appeared in the person of His Son. But this grace has not come at the sacrifice of truth, for it is "grace and truth" that here meet together. It is in Him that righteousness and peace kiss each other, like two pure minded lovers (Psalm 85:10). Although salvation comes to us as a ministry of grace, it is at the same time "the ministration of righteousness," through Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:9). In Him God is just in justifying the unjust who believe in Jesus Christ His Son. We should ever remember that it is the grace of the infinite and eternal God that has come to us by Jesus Christ.

V. Blessed Testimony. "We beheld His glory, . . . and of His fullness we all received" (vv. 14-16, R.V.) A wonderful vision—"His glory." A wonderful possession —"Of His fullness." They saw His glory on the mount of transformation. But this outward manifestation was only the visible expression of the inward glory of His grace, in coming forth to suffer at Jerusalem for the sin of the world. It is a great sight to behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the glory of the only begotten of the Father. Those whose eyes are opened thus to see His glory have hearts prepared to receive of His fullness. His fullness is the fullness of Divine riches, which are unsearchable. It was after that Joseph's brethren beheld his glory that they were privileged to receive of His fullness. It was after the disciples had seen the glory of His resurrection that they received of the fullness of the Pentecostal gift. It is when we have seen the glory of His grace that we seek after the fullness of His salvation. The glory of Christ is the glory of grace. Who can fathom it? Who has ever yet seen the horizon of its glory? This is a glory that can yet be seen. This is a fullness of which we may yet receive. Have you seen His glory? Are you being satisfied with His fullness?

JOHN'S TESTIMONY OF CHRIST. John 1:29-34.

"Coming events cast their shadows before them." The coming of the solitary and suffering Christ was foreshadowed by the appearing of the solitary and suffering Baptist. John's confession of himself prepared the way for his testimony of his Lord: "I am not the Christ;" "I am not Elijah." "I am the voice of Him who is the Word of God," crying, "Make straight the way of the Lord" (vv. 19-23). It is needful that we should know ourselves if we would bear a true testimony for Christ. He who said, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengthened me," also said, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing." In these verses John tells us seven things about the Lord Jesus Christ, unto which we may well give heed. Observe that—

I. He is the Lamb of God (v. 29). God's chosen Lamb to bear away the sin of the world, to which all the sacrifices of the old dispensation pointed. It was then "a lamb for an house," it is now a Lamb for a world (1 John 2:2). The Lamb of God was God's manifestation of his own meekness and submissiveness to the awful necessity of Divine suffering for the atonement of sin. This is the Lamb who, in the purpose of God, was "slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8). If it was needful that "your lamb shall be without blemish," it is certainly so of His. The Blood of Christ shed upon the Cross is a token to the whole world of God's willingness to "pass over," in forgiving grace, all who believe in Him (Exod. 12; 1 John 4:10).

II. He was Before Me (v. 30). Yes, a long time before John, for He is "before all things." Although John was conscious that he was the forerunner of Christ, he was conscious also of the deeper truth that Christ was before him, as a father is before his son. John's ministry was of God's appointment, but only because of the greater ministry of His Son. It is easy for us to believe that Christ was before us, but how easy it also is for us to forget that we are called to be His servants, by virtue of this fact.

III. He is Preferred Before Me (v. 30). "A man which is become before me (R.V.). In all things He must have the pre-eminence. The Lamb of God must ever stand in the front of all our purposes, as He does in the forefront of all God's plans and purposes. When a servant of Christ becomes more anxious to get himself than his Master into the place of eminence before the people, he has begun to play the traitor. God prefers His Son above all His servants, therefore let not the servant insult Him by preferring himself.

IV. He would be Made Manifest to Israel (v. 31). The Paschal lamb was laid up on the tenth day of the month, and manifested on the fourteenth (Exod. 12). There were three stages in the manifestation of the Lamb of God: (1) His Baptism; (2) His Transfiguration; (3) His Crucifixion. In the first we have the proof of His Divine mission; in the second we have a revelation of His blameless character as

a Lamb; in the third we have the accomplishment of His substitutionary work as a sin-offering.

V. He is the Anointed One. "I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him" (v. 32). The dove-like Spirit came from an "opened Heaven," and was accompanied with the assuring voice: "You are My beloved Son" (Matthew 3; Luke 3). Him did God the Father seal unto that day of redemption, accomplished on Calvary's Cross. With the Holy Spirit there came the Divine attesting voice. Whenever the holy anointing comes, the voice of God must be distinctly heard. With Pentecost came the tongues of fire. Every baptism of the Holy Spirit will be followed with the testimony of God. "You shall be witnesses unto me when the power of the Holy Spirit is come upon you" (Acts 1:8).

VI. He is the Baptizer with the Holy Spirit. "Upon whom you shall see the Spirit descending... the same is He which baptizes with the Holy Spirit" (v. 33). John bears emphatic witness to the two great aspects of Christ's work: (1) He shall take away sin; (2) He shall baptize with the Holy Spirit. The one is the correlative of the other. We have the same ground for expecting Christ to baptize us with the Holy Spirit as that He should take away our sins. Surely these are two distinct experiences, and ought to be definitely enjoyed by each believer in Jesus. Pentecost is the counterpart of Calvary.

VII. He is the Son of God. "I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God" (v. 34, R.V.). As the Lamb, He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; as the Son, He is almighty to save. John was a man sent from God, that He might bear witness that He is the Son of God, so that Israel, as a nation, may recognize Him as the promised Messiah. It was as "the Son of God" that Satan tempted Him in the wilderness. Because He is the Son of God, with power, He is well able to fulfill every promise He has made. "If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins" (John 8:24).

THE FIRST DISCIPLES. John 1:35-42.

"It is safer to obey than to govern," although our own foolish hearts would rather lead than follow. There is something like a halo of glory about these two men, who first ventured to "follow Jesus." It is easy to follow Jesus in a crowd, but in almost every company or family there is need for someone with courage enough to take the initiative, and step out for Christ, and as an example to others. These early disciples became followers of Jesus in much the same way in which disciples are made now. How was that? There was —

I. A Simple Testimony. "John stood and, looking upon Jesus as He walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God" (vv. 35, 36). The preacher was "John." His attitude was, "looking upon Jesus." His subject was "The Lamb of God." His manner was earnest—he "stood," concentrating his whole soul upon the message. He was also practical—"Behold." See him now. It was a short message, but it was a word spoken in season, full of power, and was immediately fruitful.

II. An Act of Faith. "The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus" (v. 37). Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. They heard and they followed. They had been following John, but now, on the testimony of John himself, they leave the servant of Christ and follow his Master. John's desire should be the desire of every herald of the Lord Jesus Christ. "He must increase, I must decrease" (John 3:30). He preached not himself, but Christ the Lamb of God, and so they believed. Their faith was evidenced by their following. It may have cost them much to turn their backs upon their late beloved master, but the sacrifice is readily made for the fellowship of Him who can put away sin. There was no time to delay. The choice had to be made at once, for Jesus "walked," and would soon be out of sight.

III. A Heart-Searching Question. "Jesus turned and said unto them, What seek you?" (v. 38). Jesus will test the motives of those who follow Him before He commits Himself to them. What seek you? Do you expect worldly honor and preference by following Me? Is it some earthly gift from Me, or is it Me you seek? I am the way, the Truth, and the Life. In following me are you seeking the Way to God, the Truth of God, and the Life of God? What seek you? Let this question search our own hearts. As professed disciples of Christ, what are the secret motives that animate our Christian life? Are we more anxious to be honored by Christ than to honor Him? "If any man would follow Me, let him deny himself" (Matthew 16:24).

IV. An Anxious Inquiry. "They said unto Him, Master, where dwell You?" (v. 38). Perhaps they feel that the Master's question is difficult to answer in full, and if they knew where He abode they might go and have a lengthened interview with Him, so that they could calmly unburden their whole hearts unto Him. This answer reveals the deep sincerity of their souls. They wish to know Him as the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world. Where dwell you? He dwells (spiritually) in the bosom of the Father (v. 18). and those who would abide with Him will also dwell in God.

V. A Gracious Invitation. "He says unto them, Come and see." They gladly accepted His invitation, and "came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him" (v. 39). This was a blessed and memorable experience, and so John mentions the very hour of the day—"the tenth hour." "Come and see." What grace and privilege those sweet words convey to their anxious souls. It is the opening of a wide and effectual door into fullness of blessing. How sad for them if they had failed to enter in. Is not this same privilege ours, in a

deeper sense? "Come unto Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Believe, and you shall see.

VI. A Willing Service. "Andrew finds his own brother Simon, . . . and he brought him to Jesus" (vv. 40-42). That quiet time of close fellowship with Jesus results in immediate fruit-bearing. "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength." Companying with Christ leads to clearness of views and boldness of action. He could say, "We have found the Messiah." They had sought and found, so their testimony is clear and persuasive. Their work for Him began after they had been with Him. "This is My beloved Son, hear Him" (Matthew 17:5.), then serve Him. Quiet Andrew did a great work when he brought the boisterous Peter to Jesus. Can we be truly following Christ if our lives are not constraining others to follow Him? Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit: so shall you be My disciples" (John 15:8).

NATHANAEL'S CONVERSION. John 1:43-51.

There was a great difference between the manner of the conversion of Nathanael and that of Saul, but the inward change was much the same. See how it came about, for he

I. Heard. "Philip said unto him, We have found Him of whom Moses and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth" (v. 45). He heard the joyful tidings from one who had himself been found of the Christ, and satisfied with Him. Philip's Gospel was not an it, but a Him—Him in whom the hope of Israel lay; Him who answers all the predictions of Moses and the prophets, and meets all the needs of a human soul and a perishing world. He heard—but how shall men hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent. All who have found Him are surely able to witness for Him.

II. Questioned. "Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (v. 46). Although Jesus was born in Bethlehem, He was brought up in Nazareth, that He might be called a Nazarene (Matt. 2:23) Nazareth was an insignificant and, perhaps, an infamous town. How could the greatest of all prophets come from such an unlikely place? Like Nicodemus, he was disposed to ask, "How can these things be?" Philip was not inclined to dispute the matter with his thoughtful inquirer, but simply answered, "Come and see." It is wonderful how difficulties melt away when the troubled one gets face to face with the Son of God. The misty clouds of doubt cannot stand when He appears, for His words are soul-healing and enlightening beams. It is truly heavenly logic to meet the "How's" of an inquirer after Christ with the "Comes" of the Gospel. How can a man know that Christ is able and willing to save? Come and see.

III. Proved. Nathanael came to Jesus, and when Jesus saw him coming He said of Him, "Behold an Israelite indeed;" and Nathanael said unto Him, "Whence know You me?" (vv. 47, 48). Jesus at once manifested Himself to this honest seeker as the gracious and merciful heart-searcher. "Before Philip called you, I saw you." Nathanael has found that "good thing" which did not come out of Nazareth, but out of Heaven. He came and saw for Himself the wisdom and power of God manifested in Jesus the Christ. This guileless seeker very quickly became a joyful finder. It is when the seed falls into an honest heart that it brings forth fruit.

IV. Believed. "Because I said unto you, I saw you under the fig tree, Believe you?" (v. 50). The inference is clear that he did believe. What else could he do? The evidence of His Messiahship had been overwhelmingly convicting, as the demonstration made had been entirely with himself. Christ's Divinity was proven by His operating upon His own heart and conscience—not by any outward display of miracle. Moral miracles are the monuments which still attest His Divine power and Godhead. The best way to prove the Divinity and saving power of Jesus Christ is to submit yourself to Him, then you will get a witness within that cannot be silenced.

V. Confessed. "He answered and said, Rabbi, You are the Son of God, You are the King of Israel" (v. 49). He believed with his heart, now he makes confession with his mouth. The confession was fearless and full. As the "Son of God" He was mighty to save; as the "King of Israel" entire submission was His due. If we acknowledge Him as Savior we should also submit to Him as King, for He is both Savior and Lord. The confession Thomas made was: "My Lord and my God!" Many in those days, as now, believed on Him, who were afraid to confess Him (John 12:42, 43). Remember that it is those who confess Him before men that He will confess before His Father in Heaven (Matthew 10:32).

VI. Was Encouraged. "You shall see greater things than these,... you shall see Heaven open," etc. (vv. 50, 51). There is always an "open Heaven" and a blessed "hereafter" for those who so confess Him. It is a glorious and soul-satisfying vision to see an "open Heaven and the messengers of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." This is the ladder which Jacob saw. There is no other way of communication between a sin-cursed earth and an "open Heaven" but by Him. "I am the Way, no one can come unto the Father but by Me." He is the Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus. Only "angels of God" can do business in this way; the unclean shall not walk therein. Only those whose delight it is to fulfill the purposes of His will can ascend and descend upon this holy way. Have we seen this vision, and are we being encouraged and strengthened in our daily life by it?

THE FIRST SIGN. John 2:1-11.

"This beginning of His signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory" (v. 11, R.V.). Perhaps this was one of the "greater things" which Jesus promised that Nathanael should see (chapter 1:50). The "glory" of Jesus, the carpenter, had not yet been seen. There may be some significance in the fact that the first manifestation of "His glory" was on the "third day" of His appearing unto Israel, as the "third day" was to be the day of His greatest sign of all—the resurrection. We shall note the—

I. Occasion of this Sign. "A marriage in Cana." Marriage is, or at least ought to be, a united effort to perfect mutual happiness. But this marriage party did not seek this great blessing without the presence of the Lord, so "Jesus was called and His disciples;" and Jesus went, for He does desire to give His blessing to every lawful attempt after holiness and happiness. Every occasion is holy when Jesus Christ is there, and every holy season is a happy one. Jesus being there, there soon arose that need which He alone could meet: "there was no wine." Something wanting; yes, something for Jesus to do. Wherever He is there must needs be something done that will "manifest His glory." No efforts of men after true happiness can be successful without His gift of infinite grace. His wine is needed to fully satisfy the heart of man. "You have kept the good wine until now." Those who drink of His "wine" are fully conscious that it is the very best that can be got on earth (Isaiah 55:1, 2). Christless pleasures are lifeless, and soon wither.

II. Meaning of this Sign. It was the manifestation of the—

1. Glory of His All-sufficient Grace. The first word uttered by Jesus on this great occasion was significant: "Fill." Oh! how characteristic this is of the liberality of His gracious heart. "Fill the water pots." He who is "full of grace" (chapter 1:14) delights to give fullness of blessing. Less than 130 gallons might have sufficed, but this was to be a manifestation of His grace, so He gives "exceeding abundantly" above all their expectations. Every water jar was filled. He gives as much as we have room for. Open the mouth of your expectation wide, and He will fill it.

2. Glory of His Transforming Power. "The water was made wine." The first miracle of Moses, by whom the law was given, was to turn water into blood; the first miracle of Him, by whom grace and truth came, was to turn water into wine. The blood speaks of judgment, the wine of fullness of joy. The commonest mercy in life can, by Him, be changed into the richest of blessings. Not only common mercies, but common men, like Peter and John, can He transform by His wonder-working power into vessels made meet for the Master's use. Every soul converted to God has been as definitely and as successfully operated upon by the Lord Jesus Christ as when He turned the water into wine. The performing of this sign was the evidencing of His ability to make all things new. Believe you that I am able to do this? Present yourselves unto God, that you may be "transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:1, 2).

3. Glory of His Superlative Character. "You have kept the good wine until now" (v. 10). The last state is better than the first. The converted life is better than the purest of unconverted lives, as wine is richer than water. Christ could do nothing else but give "the best," as His words and works are true manifestations of His real character. Christ alone is the Maker of that wine which brings gladness without sorrow. All other wines manufactured by others to cheer the heart of man are but deceptive imitations. Christ gives the best, the best joy, the best peace, the best hope, the best promises, the best friendship, the best reward. Godliness is profitable for the life that now is, as well as that which is to come. If your life has not been changed by the power of Jesus Christ, the best is yet in store for you. O taste and see that the Lord is good. Good as His wine is now, there is yet something better kept for us, when we shall gather at the "marriage of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:7). You have kept the best until now.

CLEANSING THE TEMPLE. John 2:13-19.

There is a striking contrast between the scene at the marriage in Cana of Galilee (v. 1) and that at the Passover in the temple of Jerusalem. At the one Christ was an invited guest, at the other He was an unwelcomed stranger, although the temple was His "Father's house." In the one He wrought a miracle of grace, in the other a miracle of judgment. To honor Him is to be blessed, to dishonor Him is to be condemned. The temple is a figure both of the Lord's body and of ours (v. 21 and 1 Corinthians 6:19). In the light of this we shall examine this miracle of cleansing.

I. The True Character of the Temple. The Lord calls it "My Father's house" (v. 16). It was identified with the Name of God, and was to be a witness for Him. In it God revealed Himself, and man communed and worshiped. It was the earthly house of the heavenly and eternal King. But now, "know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, which is in you." You are the temple of the living God, as God has said, "I will dwell in them" (2 Corinthians 6:16). After the temple at Jerusalem was "left desolate" by the rejection of Christ, the Holy Spirit came down at Pentecost and took possession of one hundred and twenty temples, so that they became witnesses for the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8).

II. How the Temple was Defiled. It was defiled by those who professed to be the friends of the temple, who used their religion as a cloak, that they might secure worldly gain for themselves. They had a zeal for the House of God, because this brought them

personal profit, but they had no zeal for God Himself, or the honor of His Name. It is possible to have a zeal for the House of God (the Church) and yet be defiling the temple of the Holy Spirit all the time. If any man defile this temple, him (as a witness) shall God destroy. There is a religious zeal that is unholy and polluting in the sight of God; it is a zeal kindled on the vain altar of self-love, and fed with the fuel of selfish and worldly ambitions. That Christian life is utterly defiled that is governed by such sordid and debasing motives. To be more concerned about the body, or the forms and ordinances of the Church, than the purpose of the Holy Spirit in the body or Church, is to introduce a kind of traffic into the holy courts that pollutes and brings dishonor upon the House and Name of God. All worldly-mindedness and self-seeking brings moral defilement into that body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

III. How Christ is Treated in a Defiled Temple. "The zeal of your House has eaten Me up." They were so zealous about the things of the House that the Lord of the House Himself was to them as One who had been devoured and put out of sight. He had no place in all their appointments, no say in anything they did. He was treated as if He had absolutely no claim neither on them nor on the affairs of the House. This is the place the Almighty Redeemer gets in the lives of those who, for gain and honor among men, have allowed the love of the world to eat up their Christlikeness, or those who are so zealous for the things of religion that they have neither time nor desire for real fellowship with Christ Himself. They have a form of godliness, but they deny Him who is the power. O you zealots for the externals of the Church, what are you doing with Christ?

IV. How the Temple was Cleansed. It was cleansed by the incoming of the Master Himself. It would have been a very long while before these sellers and moneychangers moved in this direction. His presence means purity. The intruders, with their defiling traffic, were "driven out." There is no other remedy for those Christ-dishonoring thoughts and motives, which have been ruling Him out of His own House, and setting up a business in His Name for the honor and glory of self. Who of these wretched usurpers shall be able to stand when He appears for He is like a refiner's fire, He shall sit upon the throne of the heart as a refiner and purifier of silver (Malachi 3:1-3). The scourge may be needed, but in the hands of this merciful Purifier it is a scourge of "small cords." It must be a great grief to His heart to see a soul redeemed by His own Blood, that it might become a temple of God, turned into a mere "house of merchandise." You are not your own, for you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit which are His. Give Christ His rightful place in the temple of the heart, and those selfish and defiling motives, which are like so many unholy traffickers, will quickly be driven out of the life.

V. The Sign of His Authority as a Cleanser. After this "Vanity Fair" had been cleared out of the temple courts, the Jews asked Him, "What sign show You unto us, seeing that You do these things" (v. 18). The fact that He was able to drive them all out by the power of His own word and will—for it was not by mere physical force—might have been proof enough of His Divine authority, but He answered, "Destroy this temple (body), and in three days I will raise it up, not build it up (vv. 19-22). His power to rise from the dead is then the evidence of His power to cleanse the temple for the glory of the Father. Is He able now to purge the heart and cleanse the life from every polluting thing? His resurrection is the answer, the sign. This evil generation, or this dispensation of evil, shall have no other sign given to it, but the sign of Jonah the prophet (Matthew 12:39, 40).

THE NEW BIRTH. John 3:1-9.

From nothing but darkness and death, up to the light and life of God, is the experience of all who have been born from above. In seeking to understand this most searching truth, as brought before us in these verses, we would endeavor to point out that it is—

I. Taught by the Wisest of Men. The signs which Jesus wrought proved Him to be "a teacher come from God." Right through all His public life we see Him as "a man approved of God, by miracles and wonders." "Never man spoke like this man," was the testimony even of His enemies. It was He who is the Wisdom of God that said, "You must be born again!" There is no escape from this. Christ said it, and Christ means it.

II. A Necessity to the Kingdom of God. "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (R.V.), "cannot enter into" (v. 5). By nature we are born spiritually blind, and so cannot see into that sphere where God alone is King; and Satan has so blinded the mind that it is morally impossible for such to enter into it. Any birth or life that is after the will of the flesh is unfit for the Kingdom of God (John 1:13). Everything that sinful man touches is defiled, and nothing that defiles shall enter into this heavenly kingdom. This new kingdom in Christ Jesus can only be peopled by a new creation after His own likeness (2 Corinthians 5:17). The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink, it does not consist of mere carnal pleasures, which any unregenerated man can enjoy, but it is righteousness of heart, peace with God, and joy in the Holy Spirit, which no unregenerated one can possibly enjoy. He must be born from above before he can enter into the possessions of those things which are above. The pure in heart shall see God.

III. A Mystery to the Natural Man. How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus, being still a mere natural man, was not able to receive this great spiritual truth; it was foolishness unto him, because he had not that faculty by which he could discern spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:14). But he was not condemned for the lack of an understanding of it. It is those who love the darkness rather than the light that bring themselves into the condemnation (v. 19). Nicodemus loved the light of truth, and was an earnest

seeker after it. It is the darkness of unbelief that does not comprehend the true light that now shines (John 1:5). Although a man cannot reason out the mysteries of the new birth, that does not make it any the less needful. He is not asked to explain it, but he is asked to acknowledge his personal need of it. If it were possible for a man to be born again after the flesh fifty times over, that would in no way alter the case; he still needs to be born from above if he is to enter into the kingdom of God.

IV. The Work of the Holy Spirit. "The wind blows where it wills... so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (v. 8). It is the Spirit that quickens, the flesh profits nothing in the work of regeneration (John 6:63). "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? That which is born of the Spirit is spirit, or is spiritual. By no law of evolution or effort of man can that which is flesh bring forth that which is spirit. Only that which is begotten by the Holy Spirit of God is fit to enter into the Kingdom of God. The second birth, like the second Adam, is from Heaven (1 Corinthians 15:47), and is conceived in the heart by the Holy Spirit. The works of the flesh are in fearful contrast with the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16-25). He who sows to the flesh can only reap corruption. The Spirit is sovereign, and, like the wind, moves where He wills; you nearest the voice thereof but can not tell, etc. (R.V.). There is much about the Spirit's manner of working that we cannot tell, but to hear His voice, and to obey His will, is to pass from death into life; for to be spiritually-minded is life and peace (Romans 8:6). The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, the incorruptible seed which lives and abides for ever, and by which we are born again, as soon as that Word is received by faith. Of His own will begat He us with that Word of Truth which brings new life and hope to the believing heart by creating a vital and eternal union with the Son of God.

THE WAY INTO LIFE. John 3:14-21.

"How can these things be?" said Nicodemus, in answer to Christ's most searching statements regarding the "new birth." The verses indicated above may be taken as our Lord's full and perfect explanation of how a man can be "born again" even when he is old. As such they are of vital significance to every man. They contain the—

I. Revelation of a Great Need. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (v. 14). There was great need for Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness, because it was God's remedy for a serpent-poisoned people. So must the Son of Man be lifted up for a sin-poisoned world. The lifting up of the serpent was to attract the eye of the perishing, that they might look and live. There was none other Name under Heaven given among men whereby they could be saved (Acts 4:12).

II. Revelation of Great Love. "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son" (v. 16). If you love them that love you, what thanks have you, do not even the Gentiles the same? This is not like the love of God, for, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Ephesians 2:4). The depth and intensity of God's love can only be measured by the unworthiness of the objects, and the greatness of the Gift. He might have so loved the world as to speak through His Son, but He so loved as to give His Son, and in giving Him—as the "only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth"—He gave to the world a perfect remedy for all its sins and sorrows (Romans 8:32). Herein is love, love in the perfection of its nature, and in the greatest possible manifestation of its power.

III. Revelation of Great Suffering. Intense suffering is surely implied in the fact of God giving up His Son unto the death for us all, and in that the Son yielded Himself to be lifted up upon the Cross for the sins of the world (John 8:28). The way of life for fallen man is through the soul agony both of the Father and of the Son. Sin is such a fearful thing that even God Himself cannot deal with it but at the expense of terrible personal suffering. When Nicodemus, puzzled with the doctrine of the "new birth," asked the Lord Jesus Christ, "How can these things be?" his question reached further and deeper than he could possibly conceive of. How can a sinner be transformed into a saint? Through the sufferings of God, through the giving up of His Son, and the shedding of His Blood (Acts 20:28).

IV. Revelation of a Great Purpose. "That whoever believes in Him should not perish." "That the world through Him might be saved" (vv. 16, 17). This purpose of salvation is first individual, then world-wide, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. The "lifting up" of the Son of Man was the unlocking of the door of hope for a guilty world; it was the breaking forth of the sin-cleansing stream from the opened fountain of almighty grace (Zechariah 13:1). The saving purpose of God is the crowning purpose of the Bible, it towers high above all others, and casts its hallowing shadow over them all. Only "through Him" can salvation come.

V. Revelation of a Great Privilege. Salvation, through being made a new creature, is the greatest possible blessing that the God of infinite love can bestow upon sinful men, and yet He offers it upon the easiest possible terms— "Whoever believes in Him." This great salvation is threefold:

1. Deliverance from present condemnation (v. 18).
2. Deliverance from future destruction (v. 16).

3. Assurance of present and eternal life (vv. 15-16). Note that it is "he who believes on Him" that is not condemned. There is no justification before God through believing in our works or our ways, nor in the Church or the Creed. It is our God-given privilege to trust Him whom He has sent. Behold, now is the accepted time.

VI. The Revelation of a Great Responsibility. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light" (vv. 19-21). The Son of God has come as the Light and Life of men. Those who love the darkness of spiritual death, rather than the light of spiritual life, will not come to the light, lest their foolish and sinful deeds should be reproved; but he who loves and desires the truth will come to the light as Nicodemus did, even if he should come in the darkness, that his life and deeds may be adjusted with God. He had an honest heart. It is the attitude of the heart toward Christ, as the Light of life, that leads to justification or condemnation. To love the darkness of an unregenerate state, is to prove ourselves unfit for the Kingdom of God. To love the light, as revealed in Christ, is to be more anxious to be right with God than with the opinions of men, or with the thoughts of our own deceitful hearts (Psalm 139:23-24). The true Light now shines! Are we hating it, or coming to it? This hating, and this coming, is a continual process.

JOHN'S LAST TESTIMONY. John 3:25-36.

John's disciples were evidently grieved at the growing popularity of Jesus (v. 26). They were, like some modern disciples, more the followers of a man than witnesses for God. Sectarianism, which is just another form of selfishness, always blinds the eyes to the greatness of Christ's mission, and to the real relationship of His servants to Himself. But the Spirit-taught man of the desert knew better than be offended. "He must increase, but I must decrease" (v. 30). These last words of the Baptist, spoken in justification of the growing power of Jesus Christ, are full of deep significance. They teach us—that

I. All Christian Success comes from God. "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from Heaven" (v. 27). John is, of course, referring here to the preeminence given to Christ as the Son of Man. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." The secret of all success in Christian, that is, in spiritual work, lies in the favor of God. Every good gift and perfect blessing is from above (James 1:17, R.V.). The lifting-up that is not of God, is doomed to a terrible disappointment.

II. The True Friends of Christ Rejoice in His Exaltation. "The friends of the bridegroom rejoice greatly... this my joy therefore is fulfilled" (vv. 29-30). He that has the bride (the Church) is the bridegroom (Christ). She is chosen through His grace and redeemed by His blood. John, as the friend of the bridegroom, finds his joy fulfilled in that which honors Him, and brings gladness to his heart. This indeed is true friendship. Did not our Lord say of His disciples, "I have called you friends?" (John 15:15). Have we John's mark of friendship? Do we rejoice because of His voice? Is the cup of our joy filled full because Christ is being honored, even when we ourselves are being more and more dishonored in the eyes of men? If our hearts are right with Him, there will be fullness of joy at the increase of Christ and the decrease of self.

III. He who Comes from Above is Above All (v. 31). This is emphatically true of Jesus Christ. The source of His existence and the character of His life is from above, and is above all. But this is also true of every one that is born from above—born of God. They are in character and destiny "above all" that is of the world, the flesh, and the Devil. Their affections are set on things above, and they live above the doubts, the darkness, and the uncertainties of the world, and the Christ-dishonoring ways of ungodly men. We must come from above before we can attack successfully all the forces of evil that are from beneath (Ephesians 6:12, 13).

IV. To Receive Christ's Testimony is to Honor God. "He who receives His testimony has set to His seal that God is true" (vv. 33, 34). "He whom God has sent speaks the words of God." Not to believe Him and the record given of Him is to make God a liar (1 John 5:10). What was the testimony of Jesus Christ? He declared that "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). He came as a servant to reveal the words and will of God, and as a Redeemer to give Himself a sacrifice for sin. To receive His testimony by believing it, and acting on the authority of it, is to set the seal of the whole life upon the truth of God. We have never accepted the word of His salvation until we have really set the seal of our personal trust upon it. Let God be true.

V. The Father has Honored the Son in Everything. "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand" (v. 35). To think of the Savior of sinners being so loved and honored by the eternal God and Father is enough to fill every believing heart with unutterable praise and everlasting adoration. "The Father has showed Him all things that Himself does, and has committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:20-22). "Jesus knew that the Father had given all things into His hands" (John 13:3). "You have given Him power over all flesh" (John 17:2). "You have put all things under His feet...He left nothing that is not put under Him" (Hebrews 2:8). "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end" (Isaiah 9:7). "In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9).

VI. To Believe on the Son is to have Everlasting Life (v. 36). This mighty, God-honored, all-embracing Name is the only name "given

among men whereby we must be saved." There cannot be another such a One that has "power over all flesh to give eternal life" (John 17:2). Eternal life is the gift of Him who has "power over all." Did He not say, "If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins?" (John 8:24). That He gives eternal life and peace to all who believe in Him is to us the proof of His eternal power and Godhead.

VII. To Disbelieve the Son is to Abide under the Wrath of God. "He who believes not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him." At the Cross of Christ the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18). Those who know the Gospel, but have not submitted to the Son, are guilty of holding the truth in unrighteousness. God can by no means clear those who are guilty of rejecting the atoning Blood of His Lamb. Outside this Ark of Refuge is to be still beneath the dark cloud of judgment. Jesus only can deliver from the wrath to come (1 Timothy 1:10). Hear Him.

THE LIVING WATER. John 4:7-14.

These words of Jesus Christ about the "Living Water, spoken as they were to the sinful Samaritan, are deeper and more lasting than the well of Jacob. This well is unfathomable! This Water is everlasting!

I. The Nature of It. Our Lord calls it "Living Water" (v. 10). It is living in the sense that it is life-giving. That which Christ gives is not something to keep us alive, but something to make us alive. This water of "grace and truth," which came by Jesus Christ (vv. 1-17), is the water which saves and satisfies (Ephesians 2:8). It is not given merely to refresh, but to regenerate. The elements of eternal light and life are in it.

II. The Source of It. "You would have asked of Him, and He would have given you." He Himself is the disposer of this living water. Unto Him has been "given power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life" (John 17:2). "This is the pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb" (Rev. 22:1). The original source of this grace and truth is the gracious heart of the eternal God, and has been manifested to us in the life and sufferings of the Lamb.

III. The Efficacy of It.

1. It Quenches Thirst. "Whoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst" (v. 14). They never thirst for the muddy waters of sin who have drank, and keep drinking, of the water that Christ gives. They shall never thirst for any other drink, neither in this life nor in the life which is to come. "They shall not thirst forever" (Newberry).

2. It Becomes a Spring Within. "The water that I shall give him shall become in him a spring of water" (v. 14, Newberry). The idea here is that, when any one drinks this water, or, in other words, receives this grace and truth offered in Christ, there is opened up within that one a fountain of new life and blessedness—a secondary source, within the heart, of perennial joy and satisfaction. Every saved soul is a citadel of God, and although constantly besieged by the sins and sorrows of earth, they have an unfailing source of supply within. This fountain flows on forever, springing up into the ocean of eternal life and praise, in the presence of God and the Lamb.

IV. The Conditions of It. "If you knew the gift of God, you would have asked of Him" (v. 10). The conditions are knowing and asking. As soon as we know what the Christ has to give us, this knowledge should surely lead to asking and receiving. How will sinners ask of Him the greatest of all gifts, if they do not know that the gift of God is eternal life? They were blessed who knew the joyful sound of the jubilee trumpet, because they believed and received their liberty through it. If you knew the gift of God you would not frequent those streams which have their source in this sin-poisoned world, and which can never reach down to the thirst of a human spirit. This is eternal life to know Him. Ask and you shall receive.

V. The Freeness of It. "Whoever drinks of this water" (v. 14). "Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). Christ Himself, as the Fountain of Living Water; is the Gift of God to a world perishing with a thirst that is unquenchable apart from Him. Whoever, is the choice word of the infinite grace of God. It was among the first and the last words" used in connection with the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (John 3:15, 16; Rev. 22:17). Does your soul thirst for these waters as the deer pants after the water brooks? Then here is your hope: "He, every one that thirsts, come you" (Isaiah 55:1). It was on the last and greatest day of the feast that Jesus stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. "

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA. John 4:1-30.

"He must needs go through Samaria." There was a must needs for every word Christ spoke, and for every act that He did. Those Jews, which had "no dealings with the Samaritans," usually avoided going through Samaria when journeying from Judea to Galilee;

but Christ's love for sinners constrained Him to go that way. He lived not to please Himself, but to seek and to save the lost. In this He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. Meanwhile let us center our thoughts on the woman. See her as—

I. A Flagrant Sinner. It is quite clear from verse 18 that this woman lived in a condition of shameless immorality. She seems to have been the chief among this class of sinners. But Jesus knew when and where to find her. It is no mere chance-work to come into contact with the Son of God. He knows the way that we take.

II. An Awakened Questioner. "How is it that You... ask of me?" etc. (v. 9). As soon as she comes into His presence her curiosity is aroused. Whoever could come into touch with Christ without being moved in one way or another. Yet some dare to pronounce Him nothing more than human. This Samaritan knew that He was a Jew, although the Jews, in their hate, declared that He was a Samaritan (John 8:48). It is interesting to note that it was the un-Jewish large heartedness of Christ that first awakened her interest in Him. This is His chief characteristic as the Savior of sinners.

III. A Carnal Reasoner. Jesus answered the woman's inquiry with a revelation of Himself, as the Giver of "living water." He sought to make her conscious of her need of the "Gift of God" (v. 10). Her answer shows that she was in total darkness as to spiritual things. "Sir," she said, "You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep" (v. 11). As if this life-giving water was to come out of Jacob's well. But she was not more blind than Nicodemus was when he said, "How can a man be born when he is old?" Through sin, the descent of man from God is so great that, without a miracle of grace he cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:14). Carnal reason has never yet understood the Word of God.

IV. A Bewildered Trifler. "Sir, give me this water that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw" (v. 15), She has now got a faint glimmering that He is not speaking of the water in the well of Jacob; but she has the idea that the water He gives is but a substitute for that which was in Sychar's Well. So her quick, flippant answer is: Oh, that would be very convenient; just give it me that I may be saved the pain of thirst, and the trouble of carrying it from the well. Her curiosity seems now turned into a sort of half-puzzled spirit of ridicule. As yet she is unfit to receive the Kingdom of God by faith. The deep things of God are never revealed to a frivolous soul. The plough of conviction must be driven deeper down. The seed of the Word must have an honest heart.

V. A Religious Inquirer. The Lord met her flippant reply with these stinging words: "Go, call your husband" (vv. 16-20). This led up to the confession: "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet." All lightness and frivolousness seems now to vanish, and in downright earnestness she asks Him to settle for her that vexed question as to "where men ought to worship." The mental and moral process through which this woman passed is in beautiful harmony with the teaching of all the New Testament, and with present-day Christian experience. The question now with this anxious soul is: Where should I worship? How am I to be put right with God? What must I do to be saved?

VI. An Earnest Listener. Now that the conversation had so wonderfully turned upon the most vital point for a sin-smitten seeking soul, with what eagerness would she drink in the message of light and life from her Savior's lips. What a message this is (vv. 21-24). "Woman, believe Me... worship the Father in spirit and in truth...God is a Spirit." This was a new revelation to her, and was the death-blow to all her prejudice, self-righteousness, and sectarianism. It was also the opening of a new door of hope for her, in bringing salvation within her reach there and then. "I know that Messiah comes," she said. "When He is come, He will tell us all things." Jesus says unto her, "I that speak unto you am He." What a transforming revelation this was!

VII. A Fearless Testifier. She went and said to the men of the city, "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (vv. 28-30). Yes, this is the Christ, who tells us plainly what we are, and what we need, and who offers to supply that need without money or price (v. 10). She was not ashamed to own Him, as the revealer of her sins, and the Anointed One of God; and her earnest, faithful testimony was blessed to the salvation of many (v. 39). She had no commission, but the expulsive power of a new revelation became in her irresistible. We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen. The love of Christ constrains us.

FAITH: ITS NATURE AND REWARD. John 4:46-54.

Some of God's brightest blessings come to us clothed in the dark weeds of mourning. If this nobleman's heart had not been moved through the sickness of his son, he never would have known the healing power of Jesus Christ through faith. Blessed is that sorrow which constrains us to go believingly to the Son of God.

I. An Earnest Request. "When he heard that Jesus was come... he went and besought Him that He would come down and heal his son" (v. 47). He heard, he went, he besought. This is the workings of an honest heart. His request that Christ would "come down" shows faith in the power of His presence, but perhaps a lack of faith in His promise. The Lord would teach the nobleman and us that His Word is as good as Himself. "The words that I speak unto you are spirit and life." They have the same character as Himself.

II. A Gentle Rebuke. "Jesus said unto him, Except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe" (v. 48). "The Jews require a sign" (1 Corinthians 1:22). In this reply, Christ was saying to the nobleman, as it were, Are you not prepared to believe Me just now without seeing signs and wonders wrought by Me? You are prepared to believe that I am the Messiah if I come down and heal your son, who is at the point of death. "You will not believe except you see." There is a faith that is more noble than this. "Believe and you shall see." What better are they of our own day, who will not believe except they feel. A lame faith is always on the look out for the crutches of "signs and wonders."

III. A Definite Promise. When the nobleman had said, in effect: Signs or no signs, in Your mercy, "come down before my child die," then the Lord offered to his faith the word of healing, "Go your way, your son lives" (vv. 49, 50). In giving him His Word He was giving him the "bread of life" both for himself and his son. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."

IV. A Believing Act. "The man believed the Word... and went his way" (v. 50). Now that he is prepared to believe Christ, without seeing signs, he is satisfied with His Word of promise, and so went his way, asking for nothing else. He had the blessedness of the man who had not seen, and yet had believed (John 20:29). This is the faith that crowns the Christ with glory and honor. The faith that saves is a faith that acts confidently. To have faith in Christ for anything promised, that is yet unseen, is to have the evidence that that thing is in reality for you (Hebrews 11:1). "He who believes on the Son has." We walk by faith, not by sight. What vital importance our Lord always associates with His words. They are "spirit and life." A man is either blessed or doomed, according to his attitude toward them. To believe His testimony is to set to our seal that God is true (John 3:33). To disbelieve this record is to make God a liar (1 John 5:10).

V. A Confirming Evidence. "As he was going down, his servants met him, saying. Your son lives... when?... yesterday at the seventh hour. So the father knew that it was at the self same hour in the which Jesus said unto him, Your son lives" (vv. 51-53). Is such faith not always confirmed by the providence of God? Had Joshua not to confess, at the end of his eventful life, that "not one thing had failed of all that the Lord had promised?" (Joshua 23:14). Believe and you shall see, for in the "self same hour" in which the almighty Redeemer says that expected thing shall be done, it will be done. Those who go in faith, and at His bidding, as this nobleman did, will surely find that He is faithful who has promised. The assurance of salvation must as certainly follow the act of faith.

THE IMPOTENT MAN. John 5:1-15.

"The Blessed One— He read the tear-stained book of poor men's souls."—Kingsley.

This pool called Bethesda, "House of Mercy," seems to have been the Jerusalem hospital. The fourth verse is left out of the text in the Revised Version. The water was evidently subject to intermittent bubbling, and perhaps possessed many healing virtues. But it is not with those who went into the pool that we have to do, but with the man who did not get in, and yet was healed. Observe his—

I. Sorrowful Condition. "He had an infirmity thirty and eight years" (v. 5). This infirmity was probably the result of his sin (v. 14). Like sin itself, it was an old-standing disease. As far as his own ability, or any mere human power was concerned, he was past hope. This house of mercy was his last shift. The mercy of God is the sinners' only hope.

II. Humble Position. This "certain man was there." "Where? There—among the "blind, halt, withered, waiting." He was not ashamed to take his place among the helpless and the needy. If he had refused to take this self-humbling step he never would have been healed. Pride and shame keep many a one away from the saving touch of Christ. To many God is still saying, "How long will you refuse to humble yourselves?" It was when the wretched publican took his place as a sinner that he was justified (Luke 18:13).

III. Fruitless Effort. "While I am coming, another steps down before me" (v. 7). He had taken his place among the "impotent folk." Now he is doing the best he can; but his best only ends in failure and disappointment. There are a great many "others," seen and unseen, within and without, that are ready to step down before a soul seeking salvation. This the broken law of God is sure to do. Salvation is not of works, lest any man should boast. His repeated failure makes him more prepared for the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

IV. Merciful Deliverer. "When Jesus saw him lie, and knew... He says unto him, Will you be made whole?" (v. 6). He knows the path of those whose spirits have become overwhelmed (Psalm 142:3). This poor man was waiting for a more convenient season, but that was not what he needed. He needed one to save him where he was, and as he was, and that Christ offered to do. Will you be made whole, where you are, just now? When he answered, "Sir, I have no man," etc., it was clear that he did not know to whom he was speaking, for those who are saved by Christ need no other man. Will you that I should make you whole?

V. Personal Call. "Rise, take up your bed and walk" (v. 8). This call must surely have come to him with startling suddenness. He had not walked for "thirty and eight years." But there is always that inexplicable something about the Person and Word of the Lord Jesus

Christ that awakens the confident expectation of the diseased and the downcast. It was utterly useless for any other man to say, "Rise and walk." It would only be solemn mockery, but coming from His lips the words were "spirit and life."

VI. Sudden Change. "And immediately the man was made whole" (v. 9). He believed the word of the Lord, acted on the authority of it, and found in his happy experience that he had received the blessing for which he so much longed. He got it, not by working, striving, or struggling, but by simply believing. The change wrought in him was both sudden and complete: "immediately... made whole." The cure itself was a mystery, but the fact of it was a certainty—perfect and God-like.

VII. Fearless Testimony. "The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus which had made him whole" (v. 15). Having met the Lord in the temple (v. 14), he now confesses Him before men, and before such men as were bitterly opposed to Him. "With the heart man believes, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10). By grace are we saved through faith, but faith is manifested before men by works (James 2:18). Some refuse to confess Christ because they love the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 12:42, 43). To deny Him before men is to be denied by Him before the Father in Heaven (Matthew 10:32, 33).

I AND MY FATHER. John 5:17-43.

The Gospel of John is the "Holy of Holies" in the tabernacle of the New Testament. John could no more invent the things taught in this book than he could make a ladder that would reach unto Heaven. John's Gospel is the Gospel of "the Father and the Son," or the Son's relationship to the Father. With the exception of Matthew 11:27, this great theme is almost never touched by the other evangelists. This is "holy ground." Let us approach it, as it were, with humble and unshod feet. From Christ's own lips we learn that—

I. He was Loved by the Father. "The Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that Himself does" (v. 20). One of the proofs of this love is that He "shows Him all things that Himself does." The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand (John 3:35). It is the manner of our gracious God to manifest His love by giving (John 3:16).

II. He was Sent by the Father. "The Father Himself has sent Me" (v. 37). Christ, as the Son, "proceeded forth, and came from God," but not of Himself, as independent of the Father's desire and purpose (chapter 8:42). "When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son" (Galatians 4:4, R. V.). What a comfort this thought must have been to Him "in sorrow's lone hour." All Christ's servants are so sent (John 17:18).

III. He Came in His Father's Name. "I am come in My Father's Name" (v. 43). He came as the Father's representative among men, and because of this "they received Him not." Men whose lives are opposed to God are always ready to receive those who come in their own name (Acts 5:36, 37). To come in His Father's Name implied that He also came in His Father's nature (chapter 14:10).

IV. He Seeks to do the Will of His Father. "I can of myself do nothing...I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which has sent Me" (v. 30). His own will was so entirely submitted to the will of His Father that He could, or would, do nothing in the strength of it. His whole delight was to do the will of God, because His law was within His heart (Psalm 40:7, 8). His meat, the strength of His life, was to do the will of Him that sent Him (chapter 4:34). With Him it was, "Not as I will, but as You will," at any cost (Matthew 26:39).

V. He Follows His Father's Example. "My Father works even until now, and I work. The Son can do... what He sees the Father doing" (vv. 17-19, R.V.). The Father knows no Sabbath in seeking the salvation of the lost, neither does the Son (v. 16). The eyes of the Son, as a servant, were continually towards the Father, as His Master. The Father was Christ's example, even as Christ is ours.

VI. He Possesses the Father's Prerogative of Life. "As the Father has life in Himself, so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself" (v. 26). The Father, who has the life in Himself that is entirely independent of all circumstances, has bequeathed the like inheritance to the Son, so the Son could say, "As I live by the Father, so he who eats Me, even he shall live by Me" (chapter 6:57). Christ, our Life.

VII. He Quickens whom the Father Will. "As the Father raises up the dead... even so the Son quickens whom He will" (v. 21). Christ is "the resurrection and the life." All that the Father has given Him, through faith in His Name, are made alive from the dead. Neither the Father nor the Son will be disappointed with the final results of the great redemption.

VIII. He Judges in the Father's Stead. "The Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment unto the Son" (v. 22). He has given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man (v. 27). Because Christ condescended to take upon Him "the likeness of man," God has appointed Him the Judge of all mankind (Acts 10:42). Either in grace or in judgment every knee shall bow in the Name of Jesus (Philippians 2:10). All the affairs of the kingdom of grace have been delegated to Him who gave Himself a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:6; Acts 17:30).

IX. He Claims Equality with the Father. "All may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father (v. 23, R.V.). He who honors not the Son, honors not the Father. He who hates Me, hates My Father also (John 15:23). I and My Father are one. "Whoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father (1 John 2:23). The life, the character, and work of Jesus Christ were so vitally connected with the life, the character, and work of the Father that, in the estimation of both, they were one. Kiss the Son, and you will find your soul's refuge in the bosom of the Father.

CHRIST AND THE HUNGRY MULTITUDE. John 6:1-14.

A life centered in God as the basis of operation must be a success, for no enemy will ever be able to break through and cut off this connection. Christ's attitude toward the multitude, as before us here, furnishes us with the principles of all true missionary enterprise. Thousands had followed Him to the other side of the lake, because "they saw the miracles which He did." But Christ's anxiety was to satisfy their need, not to entertain them with wonder-working. He knew that they were hungry, just as He still knows that there are multitudes whose chief necessity is for the Bread of Life. Observe how this is done: He

I. Desires that they should be Fed. "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" (v. 5). His will is that they should be satisfied, and He so wills because He has compassion on the multitude (Matthew 14:14). The infinite tenderness of His heart towards the needy constrains Him to seek their good. He wills not the death of any. The deepest yearning of His soul is that the hungry crowd should have the Bread of Life offered them, and that "these may eat."

II. Knows where the supply is to come from. "He Himself knew what He would do" (v. 6). No one is needed to advise Him who is the "Wisdom of God." He knew what He would do, not what He would try to do. He never makes a demand without being prepared to supply all that is requisite for the carrying out of His will. The Lord's purposes are not mere experiments, they are accomplished facts in His mind. He knew what He would do when He set His face like a flint to go up to Jerusalem. He also knew what He would do when He said, "All power is given unto Me, . . . go you therefore." His servants may be often tried and proven, but, looking to Him, there can be no defeat.

III. Seeks the Thoughtful Interest of His Followers. "Whence shall we buy bread" (v. 5). He knew Himself what He would do, but He desires that the minds and hearts of His disciples should be exercised about this great and needful business of feeding the hungry multitude. In using this form of the pronoun, we, He was declaring a community of interests between Him and His followers. The true missionary spirit has its source and the secret of its abiding freshness in the constant realization of this great fact. Is Christ not saying to His Church today, "Whence shall we find bread, money, men, that the hungry millions in heathendom may eat and live?" What is the answer? "Lord, You know." Pray you the Lord of the harvest.

IV. Makes use of Little Gifts. "There is a lad here with five barley loaves and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?" (v. 9). "Jesus took the loaves" (v. 11). They were not too small for Him. He who created the Heavens and the earth knows the true worth of a little thing, when put into His hand. God has chosen weak things... and things which are despised... that no flesh should glory in His presence (1 Corinthians 1:27-29). "Follow Me," He says, "and I will make you fishers of men." These little things have their value increased immensely by being at His disposal; so is it with every life committed to Him.

V. Himself is all-sufficient for this Emergency. "He gave thanks and distributed... to them... as much as they would" (v. 11). The source of supply was in Himself, not in what was merely given to Him. It is because of His infinite power and fullness that He is able to use weak things in the manifestation of His riches and glory. He puts the treasure in an earthen vessel that the excellency of the power may be seen to be of God. "Commit your way unto the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass" (Psalm 37:5).

VI. Feeds the Hungry through His own Disciples. "He distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down" (v. 11). Of themselves they could do nothing to meet the necessity of the eager crowd, but, through Him, they could do all that was needed. Our sufficiency is of the Lord. We, like the disciples of old, are greatly privileged in having this heavenly bread committed to us, but, like them, we would be truly guilty if we stored it up, instead of delivering it to the starving multitude for whom it is intended. Freely you have received, freely give: and give it to those in the back row of heathenism as freely as you give to those in the front row of the homeland. The manna that was "laid up" instead of used, bred worms and stank. Those given to self-seeking will surely be visited with the worms of pride, discontent, and envy; their Christian character will have an unsavory breath about it. Give, and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, and running over.

VII. Provides Enough for All. "As much as they would" (v. 11). "They gathered and filled twelve baskets (or wallets) with the fragments" (v. 13). There was abundance in the provision of Christ for every one of them. If any lacked or went away without being perfectly satisfied, the blame was their own. Christ Himself, who is "the Bread of Life," is all-sufficient to satisfy the hunger of all who come to Him (v. 35). In Himself there is bread enough and to spare for the unfed millions who are still spending their money for that which is not bread (see 1 John 2:2). This standing order of the Lord Jesus Christ, "Give you them to eat," is being but very partially

and timidly obeyed. There is no danger of His resources failing, therefore, as His disciples, let us show our faith in Him by the diligent use of those "goods" which He has committed unto us for the furtherance of His kingdom and the glory of His Name (Matt 25:14).

JESUS IN THE SHIP; Or, INSTANT SALVATION. John 6:16-21.

When Jesus had given the multitude this sign, that He was the "Bread of Life," by feeding them, He had to withdraw to the "mountain Himself alone," as He perceived that their intention was to take Him by force and make Him a king. His crowning day had not yet come. He well knew that they would yet take Him by force and crown Him with the thorns of derision. The disciples waited until even, but as Jesus did not come, and as it was getting late, they entered their boat and made for the other side. The whole scene is full of suggestive meaning. We note—

I. A Conscious Need. Their condition was most painful. "It was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them, and the sea arose by reason of a great wind" (vv. 17, 18). A threefold sorrow was theirs: darkness, danger, desertion. Neither the darkness nor the tempest need trouble us if only that wonderful all-comforting Presence is with us. Their sorrowful state resembles that of many now: in darkness, in danger, and Christless, but, worst of all, quite unconscious of their sad condition.

II. A Great Discovery. "They see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing near unto the ship" (v. 19). This is the greatest discovery the sinful, sorrowful soul of man can make. Jesus, the merciful, in the midst of the darkness: Jesus, the mighty, treading the threatening waves of death beneath His feet; Jesus, the divine, "drawing near" unto the distressed. The Christ will surely find His way to those who feel their helplessness, and who long for Him. He knows where the troubled seeking heart is, and how best to reveal Himself to such. He comes to seek and to save the lost.

III. A Comforting Message. "It is I, be not afraid" (v. 20). It is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ to save from fear. No other creature under Heaven could utter these words without incurring ridicule. This is the language of a conqueror. It is I, be not afraid of the darkness, for I am the Light; be not afraid of death, for I am the Life; be not afraid of your sins, for I am your Salvation; be not afraid of Hell, or of judgment, for I am He who was dead and is alive again for evermore, and have the keys of death and hades. "It is I, be not afraid;" cast all your care upon Me, for I am your Creator, your Redeemer and Friend. Into these few words you may read the "Gospel of the grace of God."

IV. A Willing Reception. "Then they willingly received Him into the ship" (v. 21). They gladly accepted His offer of Himself. What an opportunity this was at such a time! We cannot imagine them refusing the salvation that was offered them in Himself. Yet this is what multitudes are doing every day. It was Him they received, they could not receive His Word and reject Him. Christ and His Word will stand or fall together. They took Him into their ship in distress, and, blessed be His Name, He was quite ready to go. O heart, distressed with doubt and fear, take the Savior in!

V. An Immediate Result. "Immediately the ship was at the land where they went" (v. 21). This language clearly indicates that a miracle of grace was wrought. They were instantaneously saved from their dangerous position, and had the desire of their hearts fully met, by suddenly arriving at their longed-for haven. The receiving of Christ into the heart is always accompanied with deliverance and rest. There is nothing too hard for Him. The saving of His people is the great purpose of His mission. When the disciples got to about the middle of the lake they seemed to be dead beat, but what they could not do Jesus immediately did when He got an entrance into their ship. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us. Instant salvation is the gift of Him who alone can save to the uttermost.

THE IMPERISHABLE MEAT. John 6:26-29.

"Knowledge is a barren tree, and bare bereft of God."—Morris.

"Though I have all knowledge, and have not love, I am nothing."—Paul.

Many had been following the Lord, but He who looks upon the heart rebuked them for their mean and selfish motives in doing so. "You seek Me, not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves and were filled." To look upon Christ as merely a loaf-providing Savior was to dishonor Him, and deceive their own souls. Christ did not come to feed men, but to save men. It is not always necessary that a man should live, but it is necessary that he should be saved. He gave them loaves, but He is the Bread of Life. The words of our Lord here are very searching. They reveal a—

I. Disappointing Work. "Labor not for the meat which perishes." This does not mean that a man should not work for his daily bread, for "he who will not work should not eat." The meat that is worth working for should fulfill the true characteristics and purposes of

food, it should meet and satisfy the cravings of hunger. Therefore, do not spend the whole energy of your being laboring for a perishable meat that will never satisfy an imperishable soul. "Wherefore spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not?" (Isaiah 55:2). Give up the disappointing business of attempting to satisfy your soul with earthly goods (Luke 12:19).

II. A Satisfying Work. "Labor... for that meat which abides unto eternal life" (R.V.). You cannot too earnestly seek this meat, for it is—

1. Suitable. Suitable to your eternal spirit, because the elements of eternity are in it. Christ Himself is that meat: seek Him. "I am the Living Bread: if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live forever" (v. 51). The teaching and the work of Jesus Christ are sufficient to meet the whole need of man for time and eternity. Bread is not more suitable to the hungry, or water to the thirsty, than Christ is to the real deep needs of men.

2. Seasonable. This imperishable meat never grows stale. Time can work no change on this. It is the incorruptible provision of the incorruptible God for the incorruptible soul of man. It is as fresh today as when it was baked on Calvary, and taken out of the oven of the grave on the resurrection morning. It is seasonable in the early morning of life, at midday, and in the twilight of old age. It is in season every day of the week and every month of the year. In church or in market, in palace or in cot, in prosperity or adversity this heaven-sent food is always fit for use.

3. Satisfying. It is "that meat which endures." "He who comes to Me shall never hunger" (v. 35). Those who eat of this Bread will not seek satisfaction from any other source. Those who are walking in the sunshine have little regard for candles. The pilgrim, who has a fountain of water springing up within his own soul, will not be strongly tempted to stoop at the muddy pools by the dusty highway. This bread is guaranteed to satisfy every eater, for "Him has God the Father sealed" (v. 27). God will never put His "hall-mark" upon a counterfeit. That life must be absolutely pure before it can receive His stamp. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." There is none like Christ to satisfy.

III. How this Work is to be Done. The question is asked, "What shall we do that we might work the works of God?" The answer is plain and striking: "This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom He has sent" (v. 29). Then, to labor for this meat is the labor of faith, for this meat is the gift of God (v. 27). Faith must work its way to the Person of Christ. Men's faces are usually turned to the world in their search for the bread of satisfaction, but with what fruitless labor? The work of God is not merely that you believe, but that you believe "on Him whom He has sent." The object of your faith must be Him, as the Sent One of God: sent to seek and save the lost. "This is His commandment, that you should believe on the Name of His Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 3:23). The work and will of God has not yet been done in you, unless you have "believed on Him."

THE TRUE BREAD. John 6:30-40.

"Unlike philosophy, the Gospel has an ideal life to offer, and not to a few only, but to all."—Jowett.

The Jews, in the blindness of their hearts, still clamored for a sign from Christ, that He was that "meat which endures unto everlasting life," after He had already fed them with miraculous bread. None are so ill to convince as those who have made up their minds that they will not be convinced. Moses, they said, "gave our fathers bread from Heaven to eat: what do You work?" It is one of the glories of the Gospel that such questionings often lead to fuller revelations of the mysteries of Christ's character. It was so here. Jesus now shows Himself as that Bread from Heaven, of which the manna was a type. Observe the—

I. Source of this Bread. "My Father gives you the true Bread from Heaven" (v. 32). It was not Moses who gave you that bread from Heaven, but My Father who now sends Me as His provision for your sinful souls. "I am from above," He said. Every aspect of Christ's character, every act and word all prove that He was from Heaven. This world could not possibly produce such a unique Personality. His parents, His surroundings, or, in fact, anything outside of Himself was utterly powerless to manufacture such Bread as this. "I came down from Heaven" (v. 38).

II. Form of this Bread. "I am." Christ does not give this Bread, but He is the Bread. "I am the Bread of Life" (v. 35). "This is the Bread which the Lord has given you to eat," was said of the manna (Exod. 16:15), and is absolutely true of Him who is the gift of God. Surely the form in which this bread is served to a perishing world is very attractive. What could be more inviting to a weary, hungry soul? He is altogether lovely, and to the hungry heart He is always and everywhere precious. "My flesh is meat indeed" (see Hebrews 10:19, 20).

III. Nature of this Bread. It is called (1) the true Bread (v. 32). The true Bread is that which fully meets and perfectly satisfies all the needs of man. The vain philosophies of worldly wisdom can never do this. None but Christ can satisfy. None other Name has the virtues in it needed for the healing of the sores and sorrows of a sin-smitten soul. He is the true Bread because He satisfies every part of the deep and complex character of man. (2) The Bread of God (v. 33). Not only does Jesus Christ meet all the hunger of

man's heart after God, but He meets all the hunger of God's heart after man. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Let us adore Him who can both satisfy the heart of God and man (Proverbs 8:22-30). He is also called (3) The Bread of Life (v. 35). He is the living and the life-giving Bread, so, to come into personal contact with Him by faith is to receive the life eternal.

IV. Purpose of this Bread. To give "life unto the world." The world of unspiritual humanity has many things attractive and useful without Christ, but it has not life. The world needs the Light and Life of Christ before it can become pleasing unto God. The world is hungry at heart for the true Light and the true Bread of satisfaction, but, in unbelief, it will not look beyond itself for these infinite blessings. Whatever men may think or say, God deals with this world as a blind and dead thing, and so in mercy sent His Son as its Light and Life.

V. Way this Bread is to be Taken. Two simple words are here used to express this act of appropriation. "He who comes to Me shall never hunger; and he that believes on Me shall never thirst." To come to Christ, or to believe on Him, is that definite exercise of soul toward Him which makes Jesus Christ and all that He is our own (v. 35). Then after the soul has received Him by faith it must go on day by day appropriating Him as its daily food. Living by faith in the Son of God. They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength. Eat, O friends and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, you have no life in you.

THE PROHIBITED AND THE INVITED. John 7:32-39.

"God, being so great, great gifts most willingly imparts;
But we continue poor that have such narrow hearts."—Trench.

At this great temple feast Jesus twice cried. The first was the cry of rebuke (v. 28), the second was the cry of pity and compassion (v. 37). To them, as to many now, Jesus Christ was a great mystery. They knew Him, yet they knew Him not. They could not reconcile the "carpenter's son" with the Son of God. But, nevertheless, Jesus fearlessly declares His unique relationship to the Father, and the purpose of His coming into the world (v. 29). It was to those "officers" sent by the Pharisees and chief priests to take Him, that this hard, searching statement was made, which we might call—

I. The Prohibition. "You shall seek Me, and shall not find Me, and where I am you cannot come" (v. 34). He did not say here, "Where I go, you cannot come," but "Where I am you cannot come." This could not refer to His bodily presence, for they were now standing together within the precincts of the temple, but to His moral and spiritual attitude toward the Father. Two questions arise here: (1) Where was Jesus that they could not come; and (2) How could they not come where He was.

1. Where they could not come. "Where I am you cannot come." Then where was He? He was living in the presence of God. He was filled with the love of God. He was rejoicing in the will of God. He was guided by the Spirit of God. He was kept by the power of God. In Spirit this was where He was, and this is where they could not come.

2. Why they could not come. Because of their ignorance. They knew not the Father (v. 28). Because of their pride. They were self-satisfied. Because of their unbelief. They believed not Him as the true witness from God. So that, in their present condition of mind and heart it was morally impossible for them to come where He was. The lesson for us is very obvious, for the principle at work here is eternal and unchangeable. We cannot come to where Christ is, without possessing the Christ-like nature. Into His holiness, peace, and power, we cannot come, unless we forsake our own thoughts and ways, and yield ourselves entirely in obedience to His Word and will. "Where I am you cannot come," unless you come the way that I came, by being "born of God" and baptized of the Holy Spirit.

II. The Invitation. "If any man thirst let him come unto Me" (v. 37). In your pride and unbelief "you cannot come," but if you are thirsting for a deeper, truer, holier life, then here is your great opportunity. "Come unto Me and drink." To drink of His truth and Spirit is to come where He is. The self-satisfied cannot come, the thirsty may.

1. The Invited. It is the thirsty who are invited to drink. The invitation is to Himself: "Come unto Me." It is not, "Come to the temple, or to the Church, or to any particular form of worship." Apart from Him, every other source is polluted, every other cistern broken. It is not the gifts of Christ thirsty souls need, so much as Christ Himself. To drink of Him is to receive of His fullness, which alone can quench and satisfy the thirst of a soul after righteousness and God. A thirst for the living God is capacity for Him. Jesus Christ is the only One who ever could honestly challenge the thirsty souls of men to prove Him as all-sufficient to meet their every need.

2. The Promise. "He who believes in Me, from within him, as the Scriptures has said, rivers of living water shall flow" (v. 37, Weymouth's translation). When we have come into this place of fullness of blessing, then we have come to "where He is." When we believe on Him, as He believed on His Father, then from within us, as from within Him, there will flow rivers of living water, because the Holy Spirit will have free access into the inner life, and full control of the whole being. As good food received into a healthy stomach will manifest itself in vigorous, useful action by sending fresh rivers of life through the entire system, so will it be when the

Spirit of Truth is received by an obedient heart. The fountains of the old life will be dried up, and another fountain opened within, which has its source in the Living God, and whose streams are for the healing and salvation of others. "You shall not find Me" (v. 34), said Christ to His fault-finders, for fault-finders shall never find Him in all the true riches of His glorious character. But "he who believes on Him" shall enter into the blessed fullness of that wondrous life. Whoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

LAW AND GRACE. John 8:1-11.

The law commands us that such should be stoned; but what say You?" Such was the problem thrust upon Jesus Christ by those Scribes and Pharisees who sought to tempt Him. The law of Moses was certainly more severe than the law of the Romans. Knowing, as they did, the gentleness and graciousness of our Lord, they perhaps thought to compel Him to condemn Himself by opposing the "command of Moses." This incident is intensely critical and instructive, as it brings the claims of the law and the workings of the grace of God face to face in concrete form. We have here then—

I. A Sinner under the Law. That she was a sinner, there was no denying of it, "taken in the very act." That the law condemned her to be stoned to death was another terrible fact that could not be denied (Leviticus 20:10). As far as the law was concerned she was without hope. Where there is guilt the law can do nothing else but condemn. The wages of sin is death. Her accusers were also clamoring for her death. But what about the adulterer? According to the law the adulterer and the adulteress were both to be put to death. Why were they so anxious to get Jesus to condemn her, while her companion in sin, or perhaps the seducer himself, had escaped? Man's guilty prejudice and willful ignorance totally unfits him, not only from keeping God's law, but from administering bare justice to a fellow-creature with right motives. The accusers of a guilty sinner under the law are a terrible lot— the world, the flesh, and the devil.

II. A Sinner under Grace. The law and truth came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The law commands that she should be stoned; "but what say You?" Note the contrast—the law and You. The law is "holy, just, and good," and the law says "condemn;" but what say You? Can You say "live" when the law says "die?" Christ's manner of treating this question throbs with vital interest to us, as it, in a measure, reveals His own character, in His attitude to the law, to the accusers and to the poor, guilty sinner. There was—

1. Mystery. In answer to this question, "What say You?" "He stooped down and wrote with His finger on the ground" (v. 6). He at first said nothing, but He did something. What He wrote no one can tell, but there must be some significance in the fact that at that moment He did stoop down and write. It was a unique position Christ was in. As He came to seek and save the lost, this question, although put so flippantly, would stir His holy soul to its deepest depths. "What say You?" He could not answer this question fully by saying; He could only do it by dying. His stooping down to write on the ground may be significant of His deep consciousness that spoken words alone could not suffice to convey His answer. He must stoop down to the grave, bearing the sinner's sins, before the guilty could be freely justified in the sight of God. He came... to give His life.

2. Revelation. "So when they continued asking Him, He said, He who is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (v. 7). They saw the ugly mote of impurity in the woman's eye, but not the beam of hypocrisy in their own. They were looking only at the woman's sin, but Jesus lifted Himself up and looked at theirs. Their secret sins of unbelief and deceit are as vile in His sight as the woman's sin. Thus the great New Testament principle is introduced here. Jesus came to deal with sin, not this or that sin, but sin as seen by the heart searching eye of God. There are transgressors in thought as well as in deed. Christ came not to set aside the law, but to fulfill it. He Himself, who was "without sin," was put to death by "wicked hands." The words of the Lord Jesus here reveal something of the sinfulness of not having love, even for a sinner caught in sin. With that grace which has come to us in Christ Jesus, there has come also that truth which is in God.

3. Conviction. "And they which heard, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one" (V. 9). Instead of judging the woman, they find that, in His presence they themselves are being judged. "He takes the wise in their own craftiness." "Judge not that you be not judged." They knew that Christ was full of grace, but they overlooked the fact that this grace was yoked with heart-searching truth. He could not cover up the sin of hypocrisy. They "went out" because they had not the courage or manliness enough to face their own sins, even in the presence of the Savior.

4. Confidence. "Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst" (v. 9). The convicted accusers fled, but the penitent woman stood her ground. They could not condemn the woman when their own conscience began to condemn themselves. If this woman's heart had not been reached by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, she, too, would have taken this opportunity of going out after all her accusers had fled, but she willingly lingers in His presence. The love of Christ does not compel, but it constrains.

5. Confession. "Jesus said unto her, Has no man condemned you?" She said, "No man, Lord" (vv. 10, 11). There was something more in this reply than mere courtesy: "No man, Sir." There was surely adoration: "Lord!" Had she not seen and heard enough to

convince her that He was the searcher of hearts, and the Savior of sinners. "No man, Lord." Where is the man that dare condemn in the Presence of our sin-forgiving Lord. Thank God, the Sinless One, is more approachable than self-righteous sinners.

6. Salvation. "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way; from henceforth sin no more" (v. 11, R.V.). Christ came not to condemn, but to save (John 3:17). She was saved from the condemnation of the law, from the accusations of men, and from the power of sin. She could do nothing to save herself but trust in Him who could save her to the uttermost. Who is He who condemns? It is Christ that died. "Sin no more." A holy life is to be the evidence of sin forgiven.

CHRIST'S TESTIMONY CONCERNING HIMSELF. John 8:12-30.

The questionings of those skeptical Pharisees constrained our Lord to say many things about Himself which otherwise might have been left unspoken. The Gospel of John would not have been so rich in Christology had these seemingly involuntary gleams of His personal glory not been given. Those unbelieving Jews meant it to damage His character, but God meant it for the fuller revelation of His glorious nature. In these verses the Lord Jesus Christ tells us seven things about Himself that are each full of infinite meaning.

I. He was Not of this World. "I am from above; I am not of this world" (v. 23). The wisdom, the character, and the motives of Christ could not be the product of "this world." The world by wisdom knew not God. The parentage and all the environments of Christ's upbringing can in no wise explain Him. The only reasonable explanation of His profoundly unique character and mission is that given by Himself: "I am from above;" you are from beneath. The distance between Christ and ordinary men is that which exists between Heaven and earth, between this world and the presence of God's glory. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

II. He is the Light of the World. "I am the Light of the world, he who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (v. 12). There is a very close affinity between life and light. The plant that struggles for existence in a dark place will turn to the faintest ray of light for life. So the soul that seeks its life in the light of Jesus Christ will not abide in darkness, but will possess the light of life. The affinity between light and life is not more close and vital than that between faith and salvation. To receive the light of His truth is to enter into the power of His life. The light that the world needs is not in science, or art, or philosophy, but in Christ. "I am the Light of the world." Alas, that men should love the darkness of human reasonings better than the light of divine life! (John 3:19). Christ is the Light of the world, all other lights are but the unsteady sparks of man's kindling that cannot lead to God.

III. The Father was with Him. "I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent Me" (v. 16). The indomitable courage of the Man, Christ Jesus, may be partly accounted for by this fact—the conscious presence of the Father. "I am not alone." The only time He was alone was that brief, but awful, season when He cried on the Cross, "Why have You forsaken Me?" This is the joyful testimony of the Son to the honor of the Father. "Not alone." The Man of Sorrows had a meat to eat that others knew not of. So may we if we follow in His steps. "Lo, I am with you always" (Matthew 28:20).

IV. He Spoke the Things which He had Learned from the Father. "I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him" (v. 26). "As My Father has taught Me, I speak these things" (v. 28). Christ came, not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. This is the Prophet whom God promised to raise up, and to put His words in His mouth (Deuteronomy 18:18). As the Servant of Jehovah, He was faithful unto death. For just before He went to the Cross He said, "All things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you" (John 15:15). To reject the testimony of the Son, is to reject the Word of God the Father. To believe the Son is to believe the Father also. "I and My Father are One."

V. He Always Pleased the Father. "I do always those things that please Him" (v. 29). The Father Himself testifies to the truth of this. "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." This is one reason why our wayward souls can find repose in Jesus Christ. He who lived and died for us was always pleasing unto God. In Him was no sin, and we who believe are in Him, and accepted in God's Beloved. It is infinitely pleasing to us that our Substitute was infinitely pleasing to God. Thanks be unto Him for this heart-cheering testimony.

VI. To Know Him is to Know the Father. "If you had known Me, you should have known My Father also" (v. 19). The voice and compassion of the invisible God found audible and visible expression in the teaching and sufferings of Jesus Christ His Son (John 1:18). No one can know the Lord Jesus Christ who does not see in Him the image of the Eternal Father. He was sent by Him, that through His suffering for us He might "bring us to God." He brings us into the knowledge of God, into the love and favor of God, and into the very likeness of God.

VII. To Disbelieve Him is to Die in Sin. "If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins" (v. 24). This is a heart-searching ray of light from the Son of Righteousness. We dare not trifle with this clear unequivocal testimony of the Son of God. As He came to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, there is no escape from it, but by faith in Him. "He who believes not the Son shall not see life" (John 3:3). "If you believe not that I am He." The emphasis here is not so much on what He says, as what He is. He is the sent

One of the Father, speaking His words and doing His works, and, as such, He is the "Light of the world." To believe Him not is to live in darkness and to die in sin. By those words of the Father, spoken by Christ, shall the Christ rejecter be judged at last (John 12:48). See that you refuse not Him that speaks from Heaven, for the Lord Jesus Christ has uttered God's last word in this great theme of eternal salvation (Hebrews 12:25).

CHRIST'S HEART-SEARCHING "IFS." John 8:31-54.

The word "so" in John 3:16 is a little one, but who has ever yet been able to sound the depth of its meaning? It is like some of our Lord's "ifs" in this chapter, which are brimful of eternal significance. These are as hinges on which the life of the soul may swing in or out of fellowship with God. Let us examine them. There is—

I. The "If" of Discipleship. "If you continue in My Word, then are you My disciples indeed" (v. 31). True discipleship is the result of abiding in the truth, as revealed to us in Jesus Christ. Persecution is sure to arise because of this word, and many do get offended, and forsake it in theory or in practice (Matthew 13:20, 21). To continue not in His Word is to become false-witnesses, and so to forfeit our fellowship with Him, for the soul of Jesus Christ can have no pleasure in the man that draws back from the clear light of His Word (Hebrews 10:38). Peter was a disciple indeed when he boldly preached the Christ whom he once denied.

II. The "If" of Freedom. "If the Son therefore make you free, you shall be free indeed" (v. 36). The freedom which the Son of God gives is a freedom that can come from "none other Name under Heaven." It is freedom from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:10); from the guilt of sin (Romans 8:33); from the power of sin (Romans 6:14); from the fear of death (Hebrews 2:15); and the fear of man (Acts 4:18-20). It is the freedom of sons who have liberty of access into the Father's presence. It is possible to use a freedom that does not belong to us, but whom the Son makes free are free indeed.

III. The "If" of Service. "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham" (v. 39). "They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham" (Galatians 3:7). The spiritual children of Abraham show their faith by their works, as he did. Abraham believed God, and his faith was evidenced by his works when he "went out not knowing where he went," and when he offered up his son Isaac. Those who are the true children of the "Father of the faithful" will do works worthy of their Father. Works of faith are the infallible proofs of a true spiritual descent.

IV. The "If" of Sonship. "If God were your Father you would love Me" (v. 42). There is no way to the Father but by the Son (John 14:6). To know the Father, as He is revealed to us in the Son, surely implies that we will sincerely love the Son for so bringing us into such a gracious knowledge of the Father. To call God Father, and ignore the Son is to insult both Father and Son. The evidence of our sonship with God is love to His Son. If God is our Father in a true, practical sense, we will not only supremely love the Lord Jesus Christ, but we will also love every child of God, for "Every one that loves Him that begat, loves Him also that is begotten of Him" (1 John 5:1).

V. The "If" of Responsibility. "If I say the truth, why do you not believe Me" (v. 46). He did speak the truth, and live it, for no one was able to "convince Him of sin." He spoke the truth about Himself, about His Father, and about the needs and responsibilities of the people (vv. 12-24). They could not deny the truthfulness of His character, or the mercifulness of His mission, yet they did not believe in Him, they did not commit themselves to Him. "Why do you not believe Me?" Who shall ever be able to justify themselves in their unbelief? Oh, the infinite madness of refusing to believe Him who is the living embodiment of the Eternal Truth! The "why" will have an awfully solemn ring about it, when the unbeliever meets Him at the judgment throne.

VI. The "If" of Assurance. "If a man keep My Word he shall never see death" (v. 51, R.V.). Eternal life and salvation is in that Word. To keep it is to keep in the antipodes of darkness and death. Death can have no power over that man whose life is hid with Christ in God. To keep His Word is to keep the message Christ brings, and to appropriate its offers to our own personal needs; it is to wrap ourselves in it as a garment, and to abide in it, and so keeping it, are kept by the power of God through faith. The promise is, "He shall never see death." He shall not only "never die" (John 11:26), but never see death. Death is always a painful if not agonizing sight. Of course, it does not mean the death of the body that we often see, but that awful death, the eternal penalty of sin and guilt (Romans 6:23), for which we are thankful that we shall never see. If it is such a blessing not to see it, what a horror it must be to be in it.

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT. John 9.

It is worthy of note that it was immediately after Jesus was about to be stoned out of His Father's house that He manifested His power as the "Light of the World," by giving a man sight who had been born blind (chapter 8:59). The leading features of this chapter can be easily gathered up as we consider the story of this blind man. There was—

I. Blindness. "A man blind from his birth" (v. 1). But this blindness has all the mystery of the origin of sin hanging about it. It was not because he or his parents had sinned in any particularly grievous form that he was born blind, as some of the Jews seemed to teach (Luke 13:2) but "that the works of God should be manifest in him." This man was born blind that the Son of God might have the opportunity of showing forth His divine power and mercy, and also that the wickedness of their own hearts might be revealed. Was not sin originally permitted to enter the world for the same reason—that the wonderful works of God's love and grace should be manifest in the incarnation and crucifixion of His Son? In the same way Lazarus was permitted to die, that the glory of God might be seen in raising him from the dead (John 11:4). It is not so much with the mystery of sin and blindness that we have to do as with the fact.

II. Deliverance. The method of this man's salvation was about as strange and mysterious as was the cause and origin of the disease. His eyes were anointed with clay made by a spittle, and then he was told to "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (vv. 6:7). There was no virtue in the dust, nor in the spittle, nor in the clay formed, nor in the pool, nor in the washing to unseal the eyes of a man born blind, and to beget in him the gift of vision. All these were in themselves "weak things," but the eye-opening power lay in his obedience to the Word of Him who spoke as the "Light of the World." "He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing." The man was not responsible for being born blind, but he was responsible for accepting or rejecting the message of grace and salvation that had come to him by Jesus Christ. If he had despised the means, he would not have been obedient to the Word, and so would have remained in his darkness. The preaching of the Gospel may be like the dust, and the spittle, and the clay to some, but it is not with the preaching, as such, that men have to do, but with Christ's Word of command, that always accompanies such weak things: "Go, wash!" It is when we believe and obey Him, putting His Word to the test by an actual definite committal, that we "come seeing." There is now no excuse for spiritual blindness. "He that follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (chapter 8:12).

III. Confession. When the neighbors asked him, "How were your eyes opened?" (for they were thoroughly convinced that they were opened) his answer was simple and honest: "A man called Jesus made clay, anointed mine eyes, and said, Go wash; and I went, I washed, I received" (vv. 8-12). The blind man took no credit to himself in the matter, and is not ashamed to tell out all he knows about it, and that was not much. Like a new-born soul into the Kingdom of God's dear Son, he is so filled with joyous wonder that he is a mystery to himself. How these eyes must have sparkled with delight as he uttered these most significant words: "I went, and I washed, and I received sight." He could only tell of the means used; he could not explain how the miracle was wrought. That part belongs to Him who is the Light of the World. The change produced by the brightness of those once blind eyes was so great that they hardly knew him (v. 9).

IV. Assurance. "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (v. 25). He could not, as yet, explain the character of Him who opened his eyes; he knew not whether he was a man who had sinned like others or not (v. 25); neither could he defend himself by argument against those philosophical, unbelieving Pharisees; but one thing he certainly did know, that a man called Jesus had opened his eyes. There are always those that are so perverse in their minds as to suppose that it must have been some other Jesus, and not Jesus Christ, who performed the wonder. There is no gainsaying the fact when a man's inner eyes have been opened, and when the old things of darkness are passed away, and all things are become new. This is the evidence that a man is in the light of Christ, and that he is a new creature (2 Corinthians 2:17). In this new power of vision he has the witness in himself. There is a joyful ring about this "I know." It is the confidence born of a blessed experience.

V. Testimony. Although he knew little about the Man who opened his eyes, his faith in Him was very great. When asked what he thought about Him, he at once answered, "He is a prophet" (v. 17). The man that could work such a miracle on a poor man, without seeking any personal honor or recompense, must have been sent by God. Again, after he had told them how he had been healed, in the warmth of his enthusiasm he added, "Will you also be His disciples?" (v. 27). Meanwhile there was to him but one Man in all the world, and that was the Man who opened his eyes. He was determined to know nothing among them but Jesus who opened his eyes. His creed was: "If this man were not of God, He could not have done this great thing" (v. 33). It is a sure sign that Jesus Christ has become a blessed Master to that one who is most anxious that others should also become His disciples. The Name of Jesus has little power in our lives if it does not inspire us, fearlessly, to plead with others to trust and follow Him.

VI. Persecution. "They reviled him" (v. 28). "They cast him out" (v. 34). They could not bear his testimony, so they reproached and mocked him. They could not bear his company, so they cast him out of the synagogue. He speedily gained the marks of a "blessed man" in being "hated" and "separated." For our Lord Himself has said, "Blessed are you when men shall hate you... and separate you from their company... for the Son of Man's sake" (Luke 6:22). It is easier for the enemies of the truth to revile than to refute. In casting out the humble believer in Jesus, they cast away their own credit as honest men. Any one of them would have been as devoted to Jesus as he was if they had been born blind, and in the same way received sight. But it seems almost impossible for an ungodly man to think himself into the Christian position and experience for a moment, so that he might modify his judgment. As long as the veil of unbelief is over the heart, evidences are of little value.

VII. Satisfaction. After they had cast out the man, Jesus found him and talked with him, and revealed Himself to him, so that the man

was constrained to acknowledge Him as Lord, and to "worship Him" (vv. 35-38). His being cast out brought him into closer contact with the Son of God, his Savior. It was much better for Him to be outside with Christ than inside without Him. The Lord never fails to compensate, in some way or other, those who suffer for His sake (Isaiah 66:5). We infer that he was perfectly satisfied from the fact that he worshiped Him. He felt that the Lord had done so much for him that he could only fall down and adore Him for His mighty and matchless grace. This is something more than mere thanksgiving, something deeper than prayer; it is the most God-honoring act of which any creature in Heaven or in earth is capable. We cannot live without offering our desires unto God in prayer; but why are we so seldom overwhelmed with such a sense of His greatness and goodness that we can do nothing but bow and adore? Our service in Heaven will be that of adoration; why not practice it more now?

VIII. Judgment. "Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind" (vv. 39-41). Christ came not to condemn the world by an act of judgment, but, by His coming as the "Light of the World," could not avoid passing the sentence of death upon darkness and sin. Those words spoken by the Lord contain His own application of the spiritual meaning of the miracle, for all His miracles are typical of spiritual things. There are none so blind as those who don't wish to see. These Pharisees said, "We see," yet they saw not Jesus Christ as the "Light of the World," although He opened this blind man's eyes. They said, "We know that this man is a sinner" (v. 24), although that Man said, "Which of you convinces Me of sin" (chapter 8:46). Therefore, they were condemning themselves by preferring the darkness of ignorance and death to the light of knowledge and life. Those who are blind and know it (spiritually) shall soon have "no sin," for they will speedily turn to Him who has come to save sinners. But those who say, "We see," and abide in the light of those sparks of their own kindling, will find out their blindness when cast into the outer darkness of eternal doom. "Your sin remains" as long as you walk in your imagined light (v. 41). The opening of the blind man's eyes is a witness to Christ's power to impart that spiritual vision that saves from sin, and a warning to those who trust to the light of their own eyes, which lead into the ditch of everlasting darkness (1 Corinthians 3:18).

THE SHEPHERD. John 10:1-10

These "Truly's, or verily's" of our Lord, which might be rendered, "In most solemn truth," never seem to be used at the beginning of a discourse, but always to illustrate, or emphasize some preceding statement; so that the last part of chapter 9 is closely connected with the opening verses of chapter 10. Those hirelings, who cast the man out because he said that Christ opened his eyes, are here contrasted with the true shepherd, who cares for the sheep. The allegory of this chapter, like the parable in the fifteenth of Luke, is given to us in three different sections. We have (1) the sheepfold and the (under) shepherd (vv. 1-10); (2) the Good Shepherd giving His life for the sheep (vv. 11-18); (3) the safety of the sheep (vv. 25-30).

I. The Sheepfold. This was an enclosure, into which the sheep were put for safety during the night (v. 1). This may have reference to the old theocracy, that position of privilege, which belonged to the Jews as God's chosen and protected people, and into which no man could honorably enter, but by the door of birth—the seed of Abraham; or it may represent that new provision of security which Christ Himself was about to establish for His sheep, through the giving of His life for them. It is a sheepfold, there is no mention of goats here.

II. The Entrance. There is an entrance, but only one. "I am the Door of the sheep" (v. 7). It is through Him who died for them that they enter into the safety and quiet of this spiritual and heavenly fold. "He who enters in by the door is a shepherd of the sheep." The sheep and the true shepherds all enter in by the same door. There is none other Name whereby we can be saved (Acts 4:12). He is no shepherd of the sheep who has not, first of all, appropriated Christ for himself, as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. If he enters not by this door into the sheepfold ministry, "the same is a thief and a robber," and those sheep which have entered by the door will not follow him. Christ is the only open door into the salvation of God, and, praise Him, it is open for all "I am the Door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (v. 9).

III. The Porter. "He who enters by the door... to him the porter opens" (v. 3). It is a marvel to us how commentators should ignore or belittle the porter, lest they should press the allegory too far. In point of fact, the porter is second in importance to Him who is the Door, and undoubtedly represents the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Who abode with the sheep, and was their only comforter during the weary hours of night? The porter. Who could take the Door (Christ) and open it and close it at His will? The porter. Who alone had the power to admit a shepherd into the fold? The porter (Acts 13:2). All who would enter in by the door shall have the porter's help and encouragement. It is the Spirit who takes the things of Christ and shows them to the seeking soul.

IV. The Shepherd. "He who enters in by the door is a shepherd of the sheep" (v. 2, R.V., margin). The reference here is to the under shepherd, who has the liberty of the porter (Spirit) to go in and out, and to lead, and feed the sheep. The hirelings in chapter 9:34, cast out the true sheep of Christ's flock. They know not the voice of strangers. It is important to note the nature of the shepherd's work and influence as stated here. It is—

1. PERSONAL. "He calls his own sheep by name." There is no mistaking the purpose of a true shepherd when he comes into the sheepfold. He has not thought of thrashing or amusing the sheep, his chief object is to call them out into a larger place of blessing. To this end he deals with them definitely and personally. All the faithful under-shepherds of Christ's flock rightly divide the Word: they call the sheep by their proper names, and seek their individual good.

2. PROGRESSIVE. "He leads them out." It is not enough that the sheep are safe and at rest in the fold, they have to be lead out into fresh healthy pastures. The fields at the disposal of the shepherds are as broad, far reaching, and as rich as the whole Revelation of God. But those who have not examined those rich pasture lands will not be likely to lead the sheep into them.

3. EXEMPLARY. "He goes before them." The true shepherd leads by example, as well as by precept. He does not say, "Go," but "Come." He goes before them in doctrine and in practice (Titus 2:7). Not as lords over God's heritage, but as examples of the flock (1 Peter 5:3). Paul wrote to Timothy: "Be you an example of the believers in Word, in conversation, in chanty, in spirit, in faith, in purity." To the Corinthians he said: "Be you followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." The shepherd leads into green pastures, and by the still waters, not into the howling wilderness of that "higher criticism," which offers only doubt and perplexity to a hungry soul.

3. PROTECTIVE. "A stranger will they not follow..for they know not the voice of strangers" (v. 5). The true sheep know the voice of a true shepherd, and will not be led away by the call of a stranger, who has climbed up by some other way. Some religious teachers have the form of godliness, but deny the power thereof (Holy Spirit); from such turn away. The sheep that have a faithful shepherd are too well taught to become the followers of any hireling, or thief, who may don the shepherd's attire.

V. The Intruders. "He who enters not by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." It does not matter much what that "other way" is, so long as it is another way, it is an ignoring and a denial of Him who is the Door—and of Him who is the Porter—a denial of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. Those who will not enter by the door of grace into this Kingdom will have some climbing to do, and in the end rewarded only as thieves and robbers. The "other way" that some prefer is the way of legalism, or learning, human works, or human wisdom. They will climb away for years to get into the fold, rather than submit to enter by the door. But all such climbers are, in their hearts, at enmity with the Shepherd and the sheep, and seek only their own base and selfish ends. "The same is a thief." There is no other way for a sheep, or a shepherd, for salvation or service, but by the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Door. "I am the Door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved."

THE GOOD SHEPHERD. John 10:11-18

The Lord Jesus Christ is the good or perfect Shepherd. All that ever came before Him—in His stead—or that shall yet so come, are thieves and robbers. There is only one Good Shepherd who can lay down His life for the sheep and take it again (v. 18). There is perhaps no image of Christ that has so powerfully appealed to the imaginations of men in all ages as the "Good Shepherd." Let not the familiarity of the term rob us of the great sweetness and depth of precious teaching that it reveals.

1. "He Gives His Life for the Sheep" (v. 11). This is the outstanding characteristic of the Good Shepherd. He is not only ready to sacrifice His life in defense of the sheep, but has a command from the Father to lay down His life for the sheep (v. 18), that the sheep might have life through Him in abundance (v. 10). The scope of the teaching cannot be limited to the mere metaphor. The metaphor is used to help us to grasp the fullness of the truth. That Christ taught redemption here is surely beyond doubt, when He said, "Therefore does My Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I might take it again" (v. 17; Hebrews 13:20). The Father loved the Son because He willingly obeyed this command to lay down His life for the salvation of all who would enter in at this door into the sheepfold (1 Peter 2:25).

II. His Sheep Hear His Voice. "They shall hear My voice" (v. 16). Every soul who would follow Christ must individually hear His voice. That voice may be heard through the written Word, or in the preaching of the Gospel, but it will be recognized as His voice and His call to a new and separate life. Christ's first message was to the Jewish flock, but He had other sheep—multitudes of them—which were not of that flock, but which belonged to every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation, "them also," He said, "I must bring," for the death that He was about to die was to be "the atoning sacrifice , not only for our sins (Jews), but also for the whole world" (1 John 2:2). This present dispensation is the time of the bringing in of the "other sheep" which He has, as the gift of the Father, and they are hearing His voice, through the preaching of the Word, and following Him. To Him is the gathering of the people to be

III. He Knows His Sheep. "I know My sheep" (v. 14). As to the extent or limit of this knowledge, it is impossible, except by sheer presumption, to define. He knows their name, their nature, and their need. The Lord does not judge as man judges, by outward appearance; He judges the heart. He discerns the hidden spirits of men, whether they are merely carnal or Christ-like. All His sheep have a love for, and a disposition like the Shepherd Himself. "If any man love God, the same is known of Him" (1 Corinthians 8:3). The Good Shepherd does not judge His sheep by their cry, for many will say on that day, "Lord, Lord," to whom He will say, "I never

knew you."

IV. His Sheep Know Him. "And am known of Mine" (v. 14). This knowledge is akin to that which exists between the Father and the Son (v. 15). This affinity is the deepest and most sacred of all relationships. We may know Him as we know the sun that shines in the Heavens, and yet know but little of Him. The sheep know the Shepherd because He has manifested Himself to them, so we "know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true" (1 John 5:20). "I know whom I have believed" (2 Timothy 1:12). This is eternal life, to know Him and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

V. His Sheep are Owned by Him. "He who is an hireling, whose own the sheep are not" (v. 12), is here contrasted with Him who laid down His life for the sheep, as an evidence that they are His own. The flock of God has been purchased by His own blood (Acts 20:28). Jesus was speaking as the Good Shepherd when He said to Peter, "Feed My lambs...Feed My sheep" (John 21). "You are not your own; you are bought with a price."

VI. He Cares for His Sheep. "The hireling flees because he cares not for the sheep," but the true Shepherd is very careful over His sheep (v. 13). The wolf-like Satan finds his greatest enemy in the Shepherd of our souls. It is the privilege of the sheep to be without careflessness, for "He cares for you," therefore cast all your care upon Him (1 Peter 1:7). The Shepherd is most careful about the safety and supply of the sheep—about their defense and their food. His wisdom and His power are being continually exercised on their behalf. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the close of the age."

VII. His Sheep shall all be Gathered into one Flock. "There shall be one flock and one Shepherd" (v. 16). Meanwhile, His sheep are in every climate and country, speaking almost every language under Heaven, and divided by many sectarian folds, but all have heard His voice, and know Him, and are known by Him, having by one Spirit been baptized into one body. But when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, those who are still living on the earth shall be caught up with those who have gone to sleep, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). In the evergreen pastures of the Heavenly Kingdom He shall lead His flock, and they shall follow the Lamb wherever He goes. "The Lord is my Shepherd...and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Psalm 23:1 and 6).

THE SAFETY OF THE SHEEP. John 10:22-30

It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the porch of the temple called "Solomon's," when the Jews, who were bewildered about the character and doings of Jesus, came about Him, saying, "How long do you mean to keep us in suspense? If You be the Christ tell us plainly" (v. 24). He had been telling them all along by His words and works, but they believed not (v. 25). Never man spoke more plain than He, but to those who are willfully or judicially blind, such evidence is of little value. "You believe not," said Jesus, "because you are not of My sheep" (v. 26). By their persistent unbelief they proved themselves unfit to enter the sheepfold of His chosen ones. "They could not enter in because of their unbelief" (Hebrews 3:19). This question of the Jews gives Him an opportunity of explaining more fully the relationship and privilege of His sheep.

1. Their Relationship. They are His by—

1. SOVEREIGN GRACE. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them" (v. 27). "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." The Lord might have passed us by in our waywardness and misery, but in love and in mercy He spoke. If He did not speak, the sheep would never hear His voice, and never follow Him. "My voice!" There is no other voice like His. To hear it is to turn and live, or die in sin. "By grace are you saved through faith."

2. DELIBERATE CHOICE. "They follow Me." They hear Him, believe Him, and follow Him. They choose to obey His voice, rather than the voices of the world, or the whisperings of their own heart. To follow Christ is to renounce self and forsake all that would hinder the soul from abiding in His presence and obeying His Word.

II. Their Security. They are perfectly safe, because—

1. THEY HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. "I give unto them eternal life" (v. 28). The verb is in the present, and might be read, "I am giving them the life of the ages." This life is the gift of Him who laid down His life for the sheep—a gift that is continuous, running on into the endless ages of futurity. Who but the Eternal One could make such a promise and bestow such a blessing? "The gift of God is eternal life" (Romans 6:23).

2. THEY ARE THE GIFT OF THE FATHER. "My Father... gave them Me" (v. 29). The sheep of Christ are the "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" (1 Peter 1:2). "All that the Father has given Me shall come to Me" (John 6:37). They are secure because they are possessed with a life suited for the ages of eternity, and because they are the chosen ones of the Father "before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before Him in love—to the praise of the glory of His grace" (Ephesians 1:3-6). It was for such Christ prayed when He said, "Holy Father, keep through Your own Name those whom You have

given Me."

3. THEY ARE IN CHRIST'S HAND. "Neither shall any pluck them out of My hand." Of them which You have given Me have I lost none (John 18:9). His hand stands here for the almightiness of His power—a power as gentle as a mother's touch, as strong as the eternal God. No foe is able to wrest us from His hand. The sheep are saved by the gift of Divine life, and by the grip of Divine power. They are made partakers of a new nature and the subject of a new environment. They are in His heart of grace and in His hand of safety.

4. THEY ARE IN THE FATHER'S HAND. "None is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand" (v. 29). "My Father is greater than all...I and My Father are one." The sheep are in the all-embracing power of the Son, as the Son is in the all-embracing power of the Father. "The glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one, even as We are" (John 17:22). The security of the Son is virtually the security of the sheep. As He is in the hand of the Father, so are we in the hand of the Son. Accepted and kept in the Beloved, the oneness of the Son with the Father is a powerful guarantee (v. 30).

5. THEY HAVE HIS PROMISE. "They shall never perish." The negative here is doubly strong, and might be rendered, "They shall never, never perish" (v. 28). The infallible Word of the eternal Son stands like an adamant wall between the helpless sheep of His fold and perdition. The breaking of that Word would be the breaking down of His own character. One "jot or tittle" of His Word cannot possibly fail. Thus we have strong consolations who have fled to Him as the Refuge and Shepherd of our souls.

LAZARUS. John 11

The Hebrew form of the name Lazarus is Eliezer—God my Helper. Surely a fitting name for one who was so mightily helped by God. The history of Lazarus is, in a spiritual sense, the history of all who have passed from death unto life. Note the various stages in his remarkable experience. There was—

I. Sickness. "A certain man was sick" (v. 1). "He whom You love is sick" (v. 3). Loved by the Lord, yet smitten with sickness. Through some cause or other, soul-sickness is almost invariably the prelude to enlarged and deeper spiritual blessing. When Jesus heard of it, He said, "This sickness...is for the glory of God" (v. 4). Yes, blessed be His Name, for that sickness which brings us down to the place of death, that the Son of Man might be glorified in doing a marvelous work in us and for us. The Holy Spirit must convince of sin before He quickens into newness of life.

II. Death. "Jesus said unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead" (v. 14). This sickness was not unto eternal death, but unto that death which in a very singular way made Lazarus a fit subject for the resurrecting power of the Son of God. Real sin-sickness is only unto the death of self-love and self-will, that the power of Christ might be manifested. Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. When the Spirit convinces of sin, of righteousness and of judgment, it is the passing of the sentence of death upon the sinner. All hope of salvation from any other source had to be abandoned. "Sin revived, and I died" (Romans 7:9).

III. Life. "He who was dead came forth" (v. 44). The life-giving power of Jesus Christ could only be manifested in the case of a dead man. If Lazarus had only been in a swoon, or in a sleep, there would have been no glory to God in his awakening. Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners. It would bring no glory to Him to give life or salvation to those who did not need it. Before the Apostle Paul could say, "Now I live," he had to say, "I am crucified." Resurrection life can only come where there has been death. We must die to self if we would live unto God. To share with Christ His resurrection power, we must needs go to the Cross and the grave with Him. If we refuse to die, we refuse to enter into the new and fruitful life. "Except a corn of wheat die, it abides alone" (John 12:24).

IV. Liberty. "Jesus said, Loose him and let him go" (v. 44). It ill becomes one who has been raised from the dead by the power of God, to be in bondage to any man, or the customs and habits of men, especially those manners and customs that belong to the dead. As in nature, so in grace, where there is a fullness of life there will be the bursting open and a breaking forth from the old dead forms and habits. All that we can do for our dead is to bind them and bury them, but how different when, with a loud voice, the Son of God speaks to them. The man that has been liberated from death and the grave, must not be hindered by any fashion of grave clothes. Whom the Son of God makes free are free indeed. The relatives of those saved by Christ may do much to bind or loose their lives for His service. The Lord's command to the friends of Lazarus was, "Loose him and let him go" (John 11:44). What a crime in His sight if they had refused to obey. See that you refuse not.

V. Communion. "Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him" (chapter 12:2) What a blessed privilege to company with Him who has given us to know in our own experience that He is the "Resurrection and the Life." To those who have passed from death unto life there is no fellowship to be compared with His. As like draws to like, so must the resurrected spirit draw to Him who is the Resurrection. Every time we sit down prayerfully to study His Word, we are sitting at the table with Him, listening to His voice, and receiving food for our souls. Are you one of those who sit at this table with Him?

VI. Testimony. "By reason of him, many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus" (chapter 12:11) The power of his testimony lay, not so much in what he was able to say, as in what he was. The fact that he had been raised from death and corruption by the word of Jesus Christ, was in itself a most convincing witness to His Divinity and Messiahship. The greater the work of grace wrought in us by God's mighty power, the greater will be the force of our testimony for Him. The influence of Christ's risen life in us should be the leading of others to "believe on Jesus."

VII. Suffering. Because of the converting power of this new life in Lazarus "the chief priests consulted that they might put him to death" (chapter 12:10). His old life brought no persecution, but now he has the happiness of those who are reproached for the Name of Christ (1 Peter 4:14). It is beyond the power of the enemy to kill or destroy the resurrection life. Your life is hid with Christ in God. "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf" (1 Peter 4:16).

JESUS. John 11.

The Gospel of John is like the rending of the veil, it opens up the way for us into the Holiest of all. Much of the personal glory of the Son of God will be unseen by us, if we fail to discern what His sayings and doings reveal concerning Himself. In this chapter we have several bright glimpses of this inner glory, glimpses such as we have everywhere throughout the Gospels.

I. His Divinity. When Jesus heard of the sickness of Lazarus, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (v. 4). This prophetic language is full of meaningless mystery if Jesus Christ was nothing more than the "best of men." Although He emptied Himself as the Divine One, that He might live and die for us. He was still Himself, the eternal Son, in the bosom of the Father. He knew that this sickness had come that He, as the Son of God, might be glorified thereby.

II. His Love. "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus" (v. 5). While Jesus Christ was Divine, He was also perfectly and purely human. He loved all with that love of God which is the love of pity and compassion, for even those who are His bitterest enemies, but the Marthas, the Marys, and the Lazaruses are the special objects of His affection and delight. He can only delight with His whole heart in those whose hearts are opened with delight toward Him. It is not possible for such love as His to rejoice in iniquity.

III. His Faith. "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" etc. (vv. 7-9). These very suggestive words were spoken to His disciples, in answer to their alarm at His proposal to cross over from Peraea, where the Jews of late had sought to stone Him. There were to be twelve hours in His working day, and but eleven had passed. He must work the works of Him that sent Him while it is day (John 9:4). He did believe that His life was "immortal until His work was done," and so He would walk in the day that He might stumble not. Faith in God never leads to laziness or fatalism. He who believes shall not make the haste of flurried excitement, but they shall make steady progress, despite all the oppositions of the forces of Hell. "Are there not twelve hours in the day?"

IV. His Joy. "I am glad" (v. 15). The conjunction here is most remarkable. "Lazarus is dead, and I am glad; glad for your sakes to the intent that you might believe." He was glad that He was not there to save Lazarus from dying, that He might have the opportunity of raising him from the dead, that they might see His glory and believe in Him. Mark the secret of Christ's gladness—glad to have the chance of manifesting His power that others may believe in Him, so that they might be blessed by Him. This was the joy that was set before Him when He endured the Cross. The nature of Christ's gladness is totally different from that which is sought for by the sinful sons of men.

V. His Indignation. "When Jesus saw her wailing, and the Jews also wailing, He was moved with indignation in the Spirit" (v. 33, R. v., margin). Why all this wailing now that He had said, "Your brother shall rise again," and that "I am the Resurrection and the Life?" In the face of His words and in His presence, this wailing was surely to Him the wailing of unbelief. He groaned in Spirit with a holy anger because of their slowness of heart to believe all that He had said unto them.

VI. His Compassion. "Jesus wept" (v. 35). Those tears were as "drops of grief" from the loving heart of our Great High Priest, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Hebrews 4:15). What a contrast between the hypocritical tears of those would-be mourners and the tears of the pure-hearted Son of God. The voice of these tears seems to have spoken louder than His words, for, "Then said the Jews, Behold how He loved Him." If these teardrops were pearls of love, what shall we say of those blood-drops wept in the Garden of Gethsemane? "Greater love has no man than this." There is a way through Christ's tears, as well as through His words, to the heart of God the Father.

VII. His Power. "He cried with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth, and he who was dead came forth" (vv. 43, 44). This was the cry of Him who is "the Resurrection and the Life." "Resurrection," one has said, "is not an impersonal fate, but a personal effect." It is not the natural result of any known law, but the supernatural outcome of a Divine personal act. In Christ was life, and the life was the light of men. He speaks and it is done. As when Christ, who was the Life, appeared at the grave of Lazarus, Lazarus also appeared with Him, through the power of His Word; so "when Christ, who is our Life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory"

(Colossians 3:4). While on earth our Lord had to do with death in three different stages: the child on the death-bed, the young man on the bier, and the man in the grave. It was only in this last stage that He spoke with a loud voice. The raising of Lazarus was a manifestation of that power that shall one day with the voice of a trumpet awaken the dead, and as the vile body of Lazarus was changed (v. 30), so shall it be in the resurrection (Philippians 3:20, 21). This corruptible must put on incorruption. He who hears His Word now, and believes on Him... is passed from death unto life (John 5:24)

A SUPPER SCENE. John 12:1-8

According to Matthew and Mark, this supper which "they" made for Jesus, was in the house of Simon, who had been a leper, and may have been a united effort, with the two families, to do honor to Jesus and His disciples because of the raising of Lazarus from the dead, and, perhaps, the healing of Simon. It took place six days before the Passover, which meant six days before His death and burial. It must have been a hallowed time. Let us think of—

I. Mary, the Sacrificer. While others rejoice to sit at the table with Jesus, and learn of Him, Mary, who had before sat at His feet, feels impelled by the love of her heart to embrace this opportunity of proving her faith and affection by personal sacrifice. To her, at that time, it was more blessed to give than to receive. There surely must be seasons in our lives when we shall find it more blessed to sacrifice than to seek, to give than to take, to praise than to pray. See the nature of it. "Mary took a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly. " Judas reckoned its value at "three hundred pence"—more correctly, shillings As money goes now, it would mean probably about £60. The costlier the better for Mary's deep purpose of love. Hypocritical worshipers are content to give the Lord the lame and the blind, the odd coppers and the spare moments. They never cross the threshold of the sanctuary of self-sacrificing service.

See the manner in which it was given. She "anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. " It is possible to give even a costly gift in such a way as to sting the soul of the receiver. The Lord loves a cheerful giver. Mary not only offered Him her precious treasure, but her personal glory was also laid at His feet and surrendered to His service. The ointment was all the more precious to the Savior because the soul of the offerer was in it. See the influence of it. "The house was filled with the odor of the ointment. " Such a self-sacrificing act could not pass without being felt by all who saw it. Such costly offerings, made for such a sacred purpose, are sure to betray themselves (Proverbs 27:16). A consecrated life has always a sweet odor to Christ and His faithful disciples.

II. Judas, the Criticizer. The only one who did not appreciate the holy deed of Mary was Judas. The "odor of the ointment" poured upon the Son of God had no sweet savor to him, "because he was a thief, " and would rather have had the "three hundred shillings" in his bag for his own advantage. His hypocritical plea was, that it might have been sold and the money given to the poor. "Not that he cared for the poor. " Surely the Savior of sinners was more interested in the poor than he was. He who was rich, for our sakes became poor. "To what purpose is this waste?" (Matthew 26:8). Judas, the son of perdition, could not see that the breaking of this alabaster box, and the pouring out of the fragrant treasure upon the Person of Christ was the consecrating of both to the greatest possible service. It is noteworthy that the word "waste" used by Judas is literally the same word used by our Lord in referring to him as the "son of perdition. " Where the spirit of self-seeking is there is blindness to the honor and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mary's vision of Jesus was such that it constrained her to surrender all. Judas could not see beyond the black shadow of his own sinful self-interest.

III. Jesus, the Justifier. "Then Jesus said, Let her alone; against the day of My burying has she kept this. " He understood the full significance of this singularly solemn service, and always puts the highest value upon such gifts. The costly offering was in no sense wasted on Him. To His soul, in view of His death and burial, it had a sweet savor. "Let her alone. " The Son of God who sacrificed Himself for sinners will never put any hindrance in the way of a believing, grateful heart showing its devotion to Him to the fullest extent. He knows that such love and sacrifice will have its corresponding reward (Mark 14:9). "Let her alone. " Well He knew that there are so few who care to go this length in honoring Him. She broke through all the forms of etiquette, and gave to Christ exceeding abundantly above all that they would have asked or thought of. Such a spontaneous outburst of self-sacrificing affection was to Jesus the principal part of the feast. Love feasts on love. Here He had a meat to eat that others knew not of. "The poor, " he said, "always you have with you, but Me you have not always. " But those who reckon it waste to pour out wealth for the cause of Jesus Christ will not be likely to break their treasure boxes in behalf of the poor. The best friends of the poor have always been those who are the most devoted friends of Jesus Christ. The love of Christ constrains us.

DEATH, LIFE, AND SERVICE. John 12:20-26

Probably these Greeks who desired to see Jesus came from the same city as Philip and Andrew, and may have been personally

known to them. Philip and Andrew did what they could to bring about an interview, but seemingly failed. The closing words in verse 36 are very significant in this connection. "These things spoke Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them. " But while He hid Himself from them, the things which He spoke were in themselves a new and fuller revelation of the Christ which He wished them to see. He who would "see Jesus" as God desires Him to be seen, must see Him as "a corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying, and bringing forth much fruit. "

I. Death. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone. " A corn of wheat in the process of dying is here alluded to. As applied to His own preparation for the Cross, the reference is full of solemn suggestion. As a corn of wheat must fall into the ground before it will die, so He had to condescend to come into the place of death before He could reap the fruits of resurrection life. When Christ came into this world He came into the place of death. His coming was the falling of the corn of wheat into the ground, but except it die, it abides alone. A seed that had lain in the hand of a mummy for 3000 years, remained alone, but when, by another hand, it fell into the ground and did die, then it brought forth fruit. The process of dying is the process of yielding up everything to those forces that are opposed to stationary barrenness. Just as the buried seed slowly surrenders its all, so is its new capacity created for fruitfulness. The life of Jesus Christ, which ended in the shameful death of the Cross, was like the life of the corn-seed in the ground— there was no reserve, no keeping back, the treasures of His marvelous nature were wholly surrendered. "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life. " He died for us What was true of the Christ as "a corn of wheat" is also true of the Christian, except he die—to the old self-life—he abides alone. It is by being "always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus is made manifest in our mortal flesh" (2 Corinthians 4:11).

II. Life. "But if it die, it brings forth much fruit. " The life that is yielded up by the dying seed conditions and prepares the way for another and more fruitful life. Christ died, and therefore did not abide alone. The life that He yielded up has been abundantly fruitful in an ever-increasing harvest of resurrected souls. The possibilities of Jesus Christ as seed-corn dropped, as it were, from the hand of the Heavenly Father into the soil of humanity, are the possibilities of God. He shall see His seed, because His soul was made an offering for sin. Christ died, but like a corn of wheat, He was born anew—begotten again in resurrection fruitfulness. In this new life, in Him and in us who have died unto sin, there is the abiding power of eternity. Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, but "that which you sow is not quickened except it die" (1 Corinthians 15:36). If the seed refuses to die, the quickening power refuses to act. The Holy Spirit, the Quickener, can only work this newness of life where there is death. This new Divine life, begotten out of the death of the self-life, is the life that glorifies God in bearing much fruit. He who sows to the flesh shall out of the flesh, as out of poisoned soil, reap corruption.

III. Service. "If any man serve Me, let Him follow Me. " To follow Him is the highest and holiest of all service. To follow Him is to go on continually denying self. We cannot be following Him in His life of perpetual self-denial unless we are prepared daily to lose our own life. He who loves his (own) life shall lose it, and he who makes his own life of no account shall keep it unto life eternal (v. 25). Christ loved not His own life, but yielded it, day by day, unto the will of the Father, and so served Him by following Him. Our service must be of the same nature, as we have, through grace, been brought into the same privilege. Now are we the sons of God. In essence, then, this service is self-denial for the sake of Jesus Christ. But think of the blessedness of it. "If any man serve Me, him will My Father honor. " The Father honored the Son for such a service; He will also honor all who so follow His footsteps. They will be honored with His presence, His peace, and His power, and "where I am, there shall also My servant be. " "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself" (Matthew 16:24). To go after a self-denying Christ is impossible without the denial of self. We must deny our own thoughts, will, power, interests— everything that would hinder His will, power, and interests from being accomplished in us and by us.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. John 12:44-50

Our Lord's ministry on earth was first prophetic, then priestly. John's reference to the lament of the prophet Isaiah, in verses 38-41, may be regarded as the close of Christ's work as a Prophet, and here the beginning of His work as a Priest.

I. His Relationship to the World. "I am come a Light into the world." In Him was no darkness at all. The purity and power of ineffable light was in Him, to meet the needs and solve the problems of a guilty and benighted world. "I am come. " There is no other light powerful enough to scatter the darkness of a world. He comes, not as a citizen to share our sorrows, or as a patron to protect our rights, but as a Light to reveal. This was the world's first great need.

II. The Nature of this Light. It was the light of the great Heavenly Father's will revealed in the Son. "I have not spoken of Myself," He says, "but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a command what to say, and in what words to speak" (v. 49). The body of Jesus Christ was as a lantern, the light that was in Him was the Light of God, the manifestation was through His words and works. These words and works reveal infinite love and mercy, hand in hand with infinite power and holiness. The shining was perfect, for He could say, "He who sees Me, sees Him that sent Me" (v. 45).

III. The Purpose of the Light. "I am come not to judge the world, but to save the world" (v. 47). The purpose of every lighthouse is salvation. Light is a great Savior from death and destruction. There were those who were opposed to gas light, when first introduced in 1807, but it was declared that the new light had done more for the reduction of crime than all the laws of Parliament since the days of Alfred. The light of Christ is sin's greatest enemy. To see a Father's love in the life and death of His beloved Son is to see our own need and God's only remedy. He has not come as a light to shine out judgment, and condemnation, but that the world through Him might be saved (John 3:17).

IV. How this Light is Received. "Whoever believes in Me shall not abide in darkness" (v. 46). This heavenly and saving Light shines into the hearts of those who with the heart believe in Him. This faith comes by hearing. "If any man hear My words," etc. Hear His words, believe them, yield to them, and the light of life will possess the soul. While you have this light, believe in it, obey it, follow it, trust it. It is as real and as free as the light of the sun. Having believed in Him as the Light of your life, confess Him, and be not hindered by the fear of man, or the desire for their praise (see vv. 42, 43; Hebrews 11:27). To believe in Christ is to believe also in Him who sent Him (v. 44). We honor the Father when by faith we receive the salvation, which is Christ Jesus (John 6:40).

V. The Consequences of Rejecting the Light. If those who believe in Him "shall not abide in darkness," then those who believe not are abiding in darkness. Light has come into the world, yet men love darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil. To abide in darkness is to abide in death. To reject this light is rebellion against the will of God. They shall lie down in sorrow who prefer the sparks of their own kindling to the light of eternal truth. But although men reject those illuminating words, or message of God in Christ, and cling to the delusions of darkness, they are not done with this light, they must face it again in its more fierce and withering form, for He says, "The word (message) that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (v. 48). The light that has been rejected, lest it should consume their sin, will become a consuming fire for sinners. As every flower reflects the color that it rejects, so every Christ-rejecter will be manifested in that day (John 3:19-21).

CHRIST'S LAST TOKEN OF LOVE. John 13:1-17

The Passover and the supper, linked together here, is most significant. The Passover commemorated deliverance from Egyptian darkness and bondage; the supper supplied the emblems of redemption from the darkness and dominion of sin. What Pharaoh was to the Israelites, Judas was to Jesus Christ, and the consequences were much alike the sudden destruction of the enemy, and the triumph of the Lord and His people. It was here, at the supper, that Christ gave to His disciples the farewell token of His self-humiliating love to them. Let us try and think afresh of—

I. What He Did. "He rose from the supper, and laid aside His garments, and took a towel, and girded Himself...and began to wash His disciples' feet and to wipe them." To wash the feet of guests, at a feast, was the work of a slave. "He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant" (Philippians 2:7). This was the attitude of the Lord Jesus from the beginning. "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister (serve) and to give His life" (Matthew 20:28). The Lord would have our feet (walk), as well as our hearts, clean.

II. When He Did It. "When He knew that His hour was come that He should depart...unto the Father (v. 1)...that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and was going to God" (v. 3). This lowly act of personal humiliation and service was performed, as it were, in view of the awful death of the Cross and the glory that was to follow. The near prospect of the agony of Gethsemane, the desertion of His washed disciples, and the eternal glory of the Father, did not prevent Him from humbling Himself to attend to their present need. How easy it is for us to get so taken up with our own sufferings or successes as to become self-centered and proud, or unsympathetic. He pleased not Himself, but lived and died for us.

III. How He Did It. He did it lovingly. "Having loved His own..He loved them unto the end" (v. 1). Love beamed in His eyes, love throbbed in His words, love dropped at His fingers. His touch was as gentle as a mother's. He did it voluntarily. Neither law nor custom required that He should wash their feet. He did it of His own free will and choice. It was an expression of the reality and depth of His inventive grace and love. He did it perfectly. We may be well assured that when He washed their feet they would be well washed. All His words are perfect. "The blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

IV. Why He Did It. "I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (v. 15). Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus (Philippians 2:3-5). Feet-washing is a very delicate business, and must be done in the Spirit of Jesus, for it is not pleasant to flesh and blood to have our faults pointed out. There is a way of doing it that may be more offensive than profitable. To rebuke a brother or sister in an unkind manner is like washing their feet in frozen water, and let us also take heed that the water is not boiling hot with temper. Let us not forget that it is more difficult for some Christians to keep their feet (walk) clean, as in their daily calling they have more dirty paths to tread, because they are more frequently in contact with the soiling influences of the world. Humbling and painful as the work may be, Christ's example teaches us that the work at times has to be done. There will always be those who, like Peter, are ready to say, "You shall never wash my feet," but a little kindly explanation may turn it into a

gladsome experience. But woe unto those who refuse to accept the blessing offered through Christ's humiliation. They have no part with Him (v. 8; John 3:5).

SELF-EXCOMMUNICATED. John 13:21-30

Our Lord had just been washing the feet of His disciples; giving them a final example of His humiliation and self-forgetting service. After this, John tells us that "He was troubled in spirit."

I. The Cause of Christ's Trouble. "One of you shall betray Me" (v. 21). The cause of His perturbed spirit was not the fact that within a few hours He would be crucified, but that "one of you," His chosen companions and friends, would betray Him. Well He knew that they were "not all clean" (v. 11). His tender compassionate heart was troubled, not on account of Himself, but because of the fearful ingratitude and guilt of that "one" who had already "lifted up his heel against Him" (v. 18). Think of all that Judas had seen and heard of Jesus, and of the place he occupied, and the confidence that was reposed in him (allowing him to carry the bag), and think also of falling from such an height of privilege into a hopeless perdition. He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. "He was troubled in spirit."

II. The Token of Christ's Love. "When He had dipped the sop, He gave it to Judas" (v. 26). In giving the morsel first to Judas, Christ was not only showing to John who should betray Him, but He was also proving to the traitor that although He knew all that was in his evil heart to do, He loved him to the end. Had He not also washed his feet? washed off the very dust contracted by that secret visit to those murderous priests. If Judas, or any others, will sin their soul to doom, they will never find any occasion in Him, whose love is stronger than death. Did the Lord Jesus hope that this humiliating act of washing the feet of Judas would soften his hard and deceitful heart? If so, how terribly suggestive are the words which follow: "And after the sop, Satan entered into him." The tokens of a Savior's love had no effect in closing the door of his heart against the entrance of the Devil. Satan is always ready to take full advantage of every opportunity. Those who reject the grace of God, in Christ Jesus, become the willing dupes of the Devil.

III. The Departure from Christ's Presence. "He then having received the sop, went immediately out, and it was night" (v. 30). He went out. Christ did not cast him out. He preferred to go out into the night, rather than abide in the light. He loved the darkness rather than the light, because his deeds were evil. He went out; his choice was finally made. Think of what he went out from, and what he went out to.

1. He went out from the best company on earth, into the company of God-hating, Christ-rejecting murderers.
2. He went out from the rule and service of the Son of God, into the rule and slavery of Satan.
3. He went out from the place of light and hope, into the night of darkness and despair.
4. He went out from the offer of eternal blessedness, into the place of eternal doom.

He apparently did not go out as one in a rage; he went out quite orderly, as one who had something of more importance to do; something of more importance to get. But in turning away from the love of Christ, at this particular moment, he was rejecting his last chance of salvation. Having refused Christ's place, there is nothing for him now but "his own place" (Acts 1:25)—perdition. Judas may have imagined that his betrayal of the Master, for thirty pieces of silver, would not seriously affect Him, as He was well able to save Himself from the hands of His enemies; but every betrayer is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. The blood of every Christ-rejecter will be on his own head. "You will not come to Me that you might have life" (John 5:40).

AN INFALLIBLE CURE FOR HEART TROUBLE. John 14:1-4

There were several reasons why the hearts of His disciples became troubled or affrighted at this time. Judas had left the company; the Lord had been speaking of going away, and had just been warning Peter that before the rooster would crow he would deny Him thrice. Our hearts also may often get troubled when we look at the signs of the times, or when we look within at our own sins and failures. Heart trouble is a common malady, but the word and work of Jesus Christ is a perfect remedy. He came to bind up the broken heart. When Jesus said, "Let not your heart be affrighted," He at the same time poured the oil of comfort upon the troubled waters. In this prescription for a troubled heart, given by the Great Physician, there are seven comforting elements.

I. The Power of Christ. "You believe in God, believe also in Me." God, Me. To "believe in Me" is to believe in God. "I and My Father are One." What a comfort to a sinful, sorrowful soul to know that He who suffered and died for sinners has all the authority and power of Almighty God. "All power," He says, "is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). Trembling soul, affrighted at your own guilt and at coming death and judgment, let not your heart be troubled, believe in Him.

II. The Many Mansions. "In My Father's house are many mansions" (v. 2). The "many mansions" is another way of saying there is plenty of room. The reception room of the Father's house is large enough for all, and there are multitudes of private apartments for the individual comfort of the redeemed. You may be in straits here and now; there may be no room for you in the world's inns; although, like the Master Himself, you may not have where to lay your head—let not your heart be troubled, in our Father's house are many mansions.

III. The Prepared Place. "I go to prepare a place for you." He went to the Cross and the grave to prepare salvation for us. He went out of the grave, rising from the dead that He might prepare eternal life for us. He ascended into Heaven that He might prepare a home for us. The prepared place will correspond with the preparedness of the soul here, by the work of the Holy Spirit. The measure of our enjoyment of the Kingdom of Heaven will be according to the measure of our spiritual capacity. Hence the importance of growing in grace now, and in the knowledge of God. The place prepared for the Apostle Paul would not be quite the same as that prepared for the penitent thief. Let not your heart be troubled, the place prepared for you will be in every way exactly suitable to you.

IV. The Coming Again. "I will come again." When He says, "I will come again," He surely does not mean death. He who is the Life can never be compared to death. Neither did He mean the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had not yet been given. He did not die "for our sins." He meant what He said, for "the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout," therefore comfort one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). Let not your heart be troubled about the loved ones who have fallen asleep in Jesus, for in that day "them will He bring with Him," and we shall be "caught up together" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). Neither let your heart be affrighted at the things that are coming to pass on the earth, for "He shall reign until He has put all enemies under His feet" (1 Corinthians 15:25).

V. The Great Reception. "I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am there you may be also." To be received by Him is to have the honor of the Father and of the Kingdom conferred upon us. His prayer on our behalf will then have its perfect fulfillment, "Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am: that they may behold My glory" (John 17:24). "If any man serve Me...where I am, there shall also My servant be." Let not your heart be troubled although the world despise and reject you, there is a glorious reception awaiting you at the Coming of the Lord,

VI. The Eternal Home. "Where I am, there you may be also." Meanwhile the mists of earth partly blinds our eyes to the glories of that place where He is. God has exalted Him far above all principalities and powers, and given Him a Name that is above every name. He is seated at the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honor; and where He is, there His beloved bride shall be, to behold His glory, and to glory in beholding it. The place of honor purchased by the Lord Jesus Christ, as the Redeemer, is to be shared by the redeemed. Let not your heart be troubled although your circumstances here may be mingled plentifully with trials and sorrows, all tears will be wiped away when at home with Him where He is.

VII. The Blessed Assurance. "Where I go you know, and the way you know" (v. 4). Blessed be His Name, we know where He is gone, and also the way into His presence. He is gone to prepare a place for us, and He Himself is the Way (v. 6). The way to where He is, is the way of faith in Him. Faith in Him always leads to Him. "The way you know." There is a way that seems right unto men, but the end is death, instead of life and glory. Let not your heart be troubled, the way may at times be rough and thorny, and narrow, and may seem long, but five minutes at home with Jesus will abundantly compensate for all the inconveniences of our pilgrim life. The way you know, and it should be enough for us that it is the way.

CHRIST AND THE FATHER. John 14:6-21

When Philip said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us," he was giving expression to the deepest, the most secret, and mysterious longing of the human soul. The curious, critical eye can never look upon the face of God; it is the pure in heart that see Him. Philip, like multitudes in every age, was perfectly sincere in his desire, but slow to believe that Jesus Himself was the visible expression of the invisible God. "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (v. 9). In this chapter our Lord dwells much upon this fact, perhaps in answer to Philip's request. Christ's relationship to the Father can only be understood, in any measure, by thinking deeply into Christ's own statements concerning it. The hypothesis of the Rationalist is of no value in the face of His own plain declarations. From His teaching we learn that—

I. He Dwelt in the Father. "Believe you not that I am in the Father" (v. 10). The home of His soul was the bosom of God. As a Son He abode in the love of His Father, delighting in His will. He dwelt in the Father that He might be ever with Him for the glory of His Name among men (See 1 John 4:12-16).

II. His Father Dwelt in Him. "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me" (v. 11). The Father, in all the riches of His glorious character, abode in the Son for the edification and salvation of man. He pleased not Himself; yes, more, He emptied Himself, that the Father might be gloried in Him. Being in the Father, He dwelt in eternal love; the Father being in Him, the love of

God was thus manifested.

III. He is the Revelation of the Father. He said to Philip, "If you had known Me you should have known My Father also; from henceforth you know Him and have seen Him. He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (vv. 7-9). He is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15). This is the cause of that halo of glory that surrounds the character of Jesus Christ, making it unapproachably unique among the sons of men. The revelation of Jesus Christ on earth was the apocalypse (unveiling) of the Father. To know Christ in His true inward character is to know the Father.

IV. His Words were the Words of the Father. "The word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's which sent Me" (v. 24). This doctrine, in one form or another, is emphatically declared about ten times in this Gospel. It is that deep far-reaching truth, which the critics of Christ and His teaching so often forget or deliberately ignore. "My doctrine" He says "is not Mine, but His that sent Me" (chapter 7:16). "I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him" (chapter 8:26-28). To reject His words is to reject the message of the Eternal God and Father to men, and to perish in Sin and ignorance.

V. His Works were the Works of the Father. "That the world may know..as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do" (v. 31). The Father's commandments were the secret motives of His life. Just when He was about to finish His career of obedience unto death, He said: "I have kept My Father's commandments" (John 15:10). He had power to lay down His life and to take it again, because He had received "this commandment of His Father." His wonderful works, as well as His wonderful words, were manifestations of the Father's grace and power in operation through the Son. "Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me; or else believe Me for the very work's sake" (v. 11).

VI. His Desire was that the Father should be Glorified in Him. "Whatever you ask in My Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (v. 13). That the Father may be glorified He pleased not Himself, but spoke the words and did the works of His Father; and now promises to answer prayer in His Name, that the Father, who is represented by the Son, might be glorified in the Son. It is surely this Divine fact that explains the value and power of His Name in prayer (John 16:24).

VII. He is the Way to the Father. "I am the Way... no man comes unto the Father but by Me" (v. 6). To miss Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life, is to miss the Father, for the Father is in Him and He is in the Father. "This is the true God and eternal life." He is the Way to the Father, because He is the Truth about the Father, and the very Life of the Father. Christ as The Way, must be received by faith, as well as Christ the Truth and the Life. To come to Him as the Way, is to forsake our own way and to trust in Him as the Truth and the Life and so come into fellowship with the Father in Him and through Him (Ephesians 2:18).

VIII. To Love Him is to be Loved of the Father. "He who loves Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him" (v. 21). To love the Lord Jesus Christ is to love the Father and to be loved in a very special manner by Him. The effect of this mutual love is a further and fuller manifestation of Christ Himself as the image of the Father to the heart of the loving one. What a comfort to know that because we love the Son of God we are being loved by God, and that that great love of His can find no higher reward to give His lovers than a fuller, deeper experience of His Son, Jesus Christ. Oh, the depths of the riches that are in Him. How keenly the apostle must have felt this truth when he said: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed at His coming" (1 Corinthians 16:22).

LOVE'S REWARD. John 14:21-24

The words of the Lord Jesus Christ are as fathomless as His unsearchable nature. "God is Love," Christ is the perfect manifestation of that love. "He who loves Me," He says, "shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him." In these words we have the promise and condition of the greatest spiritual inheritance that God in Christ can bestow upon a human soul.

I. The Promise. "I will manifest Myself to him." The revelation of Himself is the redeemed soul's greatest solace. The purpose of the Holy Spirit in us is to take the things of Christ and show them to us. The quickened spirit of man must seek and yearn for God. "My soul thirsts for God," said the Psalmist. What Christ has done meets all the needs of a sinner; what Christ is meets all the needs of a servant. Philip may have been ignorant, but he was surely honest when he said: "Show us the Father and it suffices us" (v. 8). Let me see and know the true God and then I shall be satisfied. He had not yet understood that to see Jesus Christ was to see the Father (v. 9). This is the true God and eternal life. To meet this deep spiritual need in Philip, Christ manifested Himself to him. What a revelation this must have been to Philip. See how our Lord answered the somewhat similar question of Judas (not Iscariot): "How will You manifest Yourself unto us and not unto the world?" (v. 22). The Lord's answer to this most important question is pregnant with vital teaching. He will manifest Himself in the Spirit of the Father to the man that loves Him by "coming unto him and making His—or Their—abode with him" (v. 23). This manifestation is not outward, or external; it is the coming of the Divine life and character in fresh and fuller power into the inner man. The indwelling presence of God is the most central, the most solemn and influential reality with which the Christian has to do. The craving of a pure heart is to see God. In times of sorrow, loneliness, weariness, fruitlessness, and failure, our real need is expressed in one word: "Himself." We cannot possibly make too much of this fact and privilege of grace,

that Christ eagerly desires to manifest Himself as the Healer of all diseases, the Source of all fruitfulness, and the Victor in every fight. Whenever and wherever He manifests Himself, results worthy of Himself will be accomplished. When He showed Himself after His passion it was "by many infallible proofs." Although the two men on the way to Emmaus knew Him not when He appeared, yet did He make their "hearts burn within them while He talked to them." When He manifested Himself to Mary, there followed confession and commission (John 20:16, 17). When He manifested Himself to His unbelieving disciples, He first rebuked them (Mark 16:14), then when He had showed them His hands and His feet they were glad, and He breathed on them, saying, "Receive you the Holy Spirit" (John 20:20-22). The result of His appearing to doubting Thomas was confession and worship (John 20:26-28). His appearing to the disciples by the sea shore turned their failure into great success (John 21). Three times did the Lord manifest Himself to the Apostle Paul for the purpose of encouraging him in His service (Acts 23:11; 18:9, 10; 27:23, 24). To the suffering and dying Stephen He revealed Himself as the glorified One (Acts 7:55). In the light of all this let us seek to grasp the significance and preciousness of this promise: "He who loves Me..I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." The manifestation of Himself to us is His infinitely gracious way of meeting and satisfying our every need. But how will He manifest Himself unto us and not unto the world? This brings us to the second point, namely -

II. The Condition. "He who loves Me." This promise of Christ is forever true, and this simple condition is forever availing. Christ will manifest Himself to those who love Him. It is possible to be wise and scholarly, faithful and enthusiastic, and yet destitute of that deep joy and satisfaction which comes through the manifestation of Himself to the loving heart. Thank God, this greatest of all blessings is not promised to the learned, or the laborious, but to the loving. "Love you Me?" was our Lord's pressing question after manifesting Himself to His disciples by the sea of Galilee. The heart must become very sensitive that would receive and retain the image of the Son of God as revealed by the Holy Spirit. It is love, not knowledge, that creates capacity for Christ. Intense loving is more pleasing to Him than deep thinking. He who loves the Lord with all his heart will live in the continual vision of His comforting presence and matchless glory. The condition is love; but the proof of love is the "keeping of His words"—or teaching. "He who has My words and keeps them, he it is that loves Me...If a man love Me, he will keep My words..He who loves Me not keeps not My words" (vv. 23, 24). John, in his first epistle, restates this truth very plainly: "Whoever keeps His word (teaching), in him surely is the love of God perfected" (2:5). The soul in which that love is perfected will be honored with the apocalypse (unveiling) of Jesus Christ. It was to John, the most loving of His disciples, that the book of "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" was given (Rev. 1:1). The love of God can only be perfected in that heart where love answers to love. It is impossible to keep His words and to grow under His teaching, as He desires we should, unless there is in us a growing love and devotion to Christ's person and work. In these days of intellectual and moral activity, let us be diligent to keep our hearts right with God, otherwise there will be no manifestation of Himself as the sum of all power, and blessing, and success.

OBEDIENCE. John 14:23, 24

"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. He who loves Me not keeps not My sayings: and the Word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me." Obedience is the necessary consequence of love.

FRUIT-BEARING. John 15:1-8

Israel, as a vine, was brought out of Egypt and planted in Canaan, after the heathen had been cast out like weeds (Psalm 80:8). This vine, though noble, and of a right seed, soon degenerated into a strange plant to God (Jeremiah 2:21). But Jesus Christ is the true Vine, brought down from Heaven and planted in the earth. He was the faithful and true witness. There was nothing in Him to create a feeling of "strangeness" or disappointment in the heart of God. He was true to God, true to His own nature, true to His environment, and to the sons of men. But the principle thought here is that, as a Vine, He is true to those who are associated with Him as branches, so that they might bring forth fruit. Note the—

I. Source of Fruit. "The vine," The branch cannot bear fruit of itself (v. 4). "Apart from Me, you can do nothing" (v. 5, R.V.). Impoverished branches in this vine is no evidence of an impoverished vine, for God gives not the Spirit with limitations to Him (John 3:34). All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, of grace and power, are in Him, even the "fullness of the Godhead." "From Me is your fruit found" (Hosea 14:8).

II. Removal of the Fruitless. "Every branch in Me that bears not fruit He takes away" (v. 2). "If any man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered" (v. 6). This may refer to those who are in Him religiously, but not spiritually: those who have been from their birth brought up in the form of godliness, but who have never known the power and sweetness of His fellowship. There is an outward resemblance to the vine branch, but no production of the vine fruit, so the gardener deals with it as having no connection with the vine. Such a branch "cast forth" can do nothing else but wither. Apart from Christ, there is no saving or preserving power in

man. It is only those whose roots are in the river of God whose leaves shall not wither (Psalm 1:3). These withered branches are gathered, not by the angel reapers, but by men, who cast them into the fire of testing, and they are burned. A religious, Christless life will never be of much use to men, far less to God. Like savorless salt, they are good for nothing.

III. Pruning of the Fruitful. "Every branch that bears fruit, He cleanses it, that it may bear more fruit" (vv. 2, 3). There are growths about the Christian life, as there are about the vine, which do not tend to fruitfulness, shoots that show signs of a vigor which is only fit for the pruning knife. The riches of the grace of God is seen here in seeking to make the fruitful more fruitful. Those fit for His service He desires to make more fit. The process may be painful, to have our new-born desires and fresh efforts nipped off and thrown away as hindrances; but His will be done. The heart life is to be kept pure by faith (Acts 15:9). The pruning knife is the Word of God which is sharp and powerful....discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart. "Now are you clean through the Word."

IV. Nature of the Fruit. "Bear much fruit, so shall you be My disciples" (v. 8). That branch is a true disciple of the vine that bears much of the fruit of the vine. We are the true disciples of Christ when His character manifests itself in our lives. What the sap of the vine is to the branch, the Spirit of Christ is to the Christian. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, etc., because the Spirit Himself is all this, and when He has free access into our hearts, and full control of them, His own personal characteristics will appear as fruit in our lives.

V. Condition of Fruitfulness. "He who abides in Me and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit" (v. 5). The human side is, "He in me;" the Divine, "I in Him." "The branch cannot bear fruit of itself.... no more can you except you abide in Me" (v. 4). "In me," that is, in my flesh dwells no good thing, but in Him all fullness dwells. His grace will be perfected in us, as we by faith abide in Him. Constant contact with Him implies the attitude of continual receptiveness, "I in Him." To abide in Him is to abide in His Word, His will, and His work, then God works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

VI. Results of Fruitfulness. "Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples" (v. 8). The results are twofold: the Father is glorified, and our true discipleship is proven. It is to the honor of the gardener that the tree brings forth fruit abundantly. It is also to the credit of the tree that it so proves its good character by its works. Where there is wholehearted discipleship there will be fruitfulness and a life glorifying to the Father. Fruit is the natural outcome of a faithful following of Christ, as well as an evidence of it. The life lived in Christ, and for Him, is the only God-glorifying life. "Much fruit" means much love, much joy, much peace, etc.

BRANCHES, DISCIPLES, FRIENDS. John 15

These are not empty titles, the Lord Himself is the Author of each of them, but they are each conditioned with something else. The first with abiding, the second with fruit-bearing, the third with obedience. These three names are suggestive of three different experiences.

I. As Branches, we Receive. "I am the Vine, you are the branches" (v. 5). This process and privilege of receiving of the fullness that is in Christ cannot begin until we as branches have been broken off the old fruitless Adam-stock, and grafted into Him who is the second Adam, the True Vine. The precious sap of this Vine (Spirit) will never minister to the pride of the old selfish sinful life. But having been planted into Christ, we now live by faith that is in Him. The branch cannot live apart from the vine, no more can you. To live apart from Christ is to be dead while we live. "Because I live you shall live also" (John 14:19), if you abide in Me. The life of the branch, then, is a life of continual appropriation. The call of the vine to the branch is to take, take, take. "Let him that is a thirst, take." "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." This receiving of the sap by the branch was to manifest itself in fruitfulness To be filled with the Spirit is to be filled with the fruit of the Spirit, as it is possible to grow apples of different quality on the same stock, so, by the same Spirit there may be different manifestation, according to the character of the branch. While our union with Christ is the death of our sinful life, it is not the death of our individuality. In every Christian life the whole fruit of the Spirit should be found (Galatians 5:22, 23), but, as a rule, in the lives of Christians, someone or two aspects of this fruit are often found prominent, this may be partly due to the nature of the recipient. Still, "the wind blows where it wills."

II. As Disciples, we Follow. "So shall you be My disciples" (v. 8). In continuing the metaphor of the vine and branches here, the idea is, that the branch truly follows the vine, when it abides in it, and when by the power imparted to it, it faithfully carries out the purpose for which the vine had been given. So, by an adherence to the mind and will of our Lord, and by the bringing forth of much of the fruit of the Spirit, we are declaring ourselves to be walking in His footsteps. "If you continue in My Word, then are you My disciples indeed" (John 8:31). This discipleship implies a readiness to sit at His feet, like Mary, and to learn of Him who is the Great Teacher come from God. It implies also a willingness to believe every word He says. How can His words abide in us if they are not received by faith (v. 7). How can we follow His example if we do not live and walk by faith in the Word of God as He did. Another mark of discipleship is love one to another (John 13:35).

III. As Friends, we Commune. "You are My friends... I have called you friends (not patients), for all things that I have heard of My

Father I have made known unto you" (vv. 14, 15). A friend comes closer to the heart than a servant, "A servant knows not what his Lord does." It is a very sacred and humbling privilege to walk among men as the friends of Jesus Christ. As His friends, living in communion with Him, we become—

1. Sharers of His SECRETS. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him" (Psalm 25:14). It was of him who was "the friend of God" that God said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" The deep heart purposes of the Son of God are revealed to those who live in fellowship with Him. In the light of His presence they see light clearly. They walk among the gloomy shadows of a sinful world, with the secrets of life, peace, and eternal glory in their souls.

2. Sharers of His SYMPATHIES. As a devoted wife becomes a partaker of her husband's likes and dislikes, so does the friend of Jesus, through close contact with Him, becomes imbued with His thoughts and feelings. They love all that He loves and hate all that He hates. They are in real heart sympathy with Him in His desire to honor the Father, and at the same time to love, and seek to save, the sinful sons of men.

3. Sharers of His SUFFERINGS. "The world hated Me... because you are not of the world...therefore the world hates you" (vv. 18, 19). Christ suffered because of His unlikeness to the world. His true friends will fare little better. Christ suffered in His daily life because of His sympathy with God His Father, and His separation from the sins and false conception of His age. The more we become like Him the more shall we feel the power of those forces in the world which were opposed to Him.

4. Sharers of His CONSOLATIONS. "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds by Christ" (2 Corinthians 1:5). To be made a partaker of His sufferings, is to become an heir of His consolations. Such consolations are neither few nor small, good measure, pressed down and running over. What the Father was to the Son, the Holy Spirit, the Comforter is to us an ever present, all sufficient compensation for all the sorrows and sufferings incurred through our sympathy with Christ, and service for Him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him, that is consolation indeed.

"I AND YOU". John 15:12-26

In this chapter alone Christ uses the first personal pronoun with studied emphasis eleven times. In each case the chief importance of the words spoken lie in the character of Him who speaks. In these impressive I's of His there is the thought of—

I. Grace. "I have loved you" (v. 12). You who sometime were afar off, but are now made near: you who were once in ignorance of Me, and walked according to the course of this world. I have loved you with a love that can only be compared with that love with which the Father has loved Me (v. 9). "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich."

II. Separation. "I chose you out of the world" (v. 19, R.V.). "The whole world lies in wickedness" (John 5:19). To be chosen of Christ is to be called out of the world into His fellowship and Kingdom. In this fellowship you shall be partakers of His sufferings, for the world that hated Him will hate you. The Cain-spirit that seeks to slay those more righteous than themselves is ever with us (1 John 3:12). We are chosen out of the world like Noah, that we might be saved from it, and become witnesses against it. By faith, like Abraham, we must go out.

III. Friendship. "I have called you friends" (v. 15). To be called friends by Him who is God's best Friend is an honor indeed. It was a blessed day for Mordecai when he was declared the friend of the king (Esther 6:11). Servants have kitchen privileges, but friends have parlor opportunities. Anywhere in the Lord's house is an honor and a blessing, but covet earnestly the best gifts. He will call you friend if you abide in Him.

IV. Teaching. "All things....I have made known unto you" (v. 15). He is the great Teacher come from God. As He sought to instill into the minds of His disciples the things that He heard of His Father, so by the Holy Spirit does He still make known the will of the Father, for all things are now delivered unto Him, and the Spirit takes the things which are His and shows them unto us.

V. Responsibility. "I have chosen you....that you should bring forth fruit" (v. 16). Having called His disciples friends, and having instructed them in the things concerning Himself, He expects them to be something else than mere patients in a doctor's hands. The love that has grown into friendship must go on ripening into fruitful service. A fruitless branch never serves the purpose of the vine. A barren Christian profession is a misrepresentation of Christ. "Chosen and ordained to bring forth fruit" (v. 16). If the fruit of the Spirit is not manifest in our lives, we are falsifying both our calling and our ordination.

VI. Brotherly Love. "I command you that you love one another" (v. 17). Love is the bond that is to hold His people one to another amidst the hatred and opposition of this world. It is His command, His new commandment which is the sum of the whole law. Have this salt of love in yourselves, and there shall be peace one with another (Mark 9:50). Not to love one another is an act of rebellion against the rule of Christ.

VII. Promise. "I will send you....the Spirit of truth" (v. 26). The word Comforter in this verse may be translated "Helper." This promised "Helper" is the "Spirit of truth." This "Spirit of truth the devil-deluded world cannot receive, because it sees Him not, but He shall be in you" (John 14:17). In promising the Spirit, Christ promised every needful thing for life and service. He is the Spirit of truth, of grace, of burning, and of power. What a Helper He is! How fruitless our testimony without Him! "I will send Him unto you." "Receive you the Holy Spirit."

THE GREAT HELPER. John 16:7-15

The Lord Jesus Christ is mighty to save a sinner; the Holy Spirit is mighty to help a saint. The word "Comforter" has been variously translated. The terms "Advocate," "Paraclete," "Helper," have been used. In Romans 8:26, we read that "The Spirit helps our infirmities"—literally takes hold with me. The same word is used in Luke 10:40, but nowhere else in the New Testament. "Bid her therefore that she help me." The Holy Spirit has come, as one who is willing and mighty to "take hold with me," that I might be helped in doing the will and work of God.

I. The Condition of His Coming. "If I go not away, the Helper will not come unto you, but if I go, I will send Him (not it) unto you" (v. 7). Christ had to go, taking humanity into the character and presence of God, before the Spirit could come, bringing divinity into the character and presence of man (Acts 2:33). The bodily absence of the Redeemer was to ensure the spiritual presence of the Helper. The Spirit could not be given until Jesus was glorified (John 7:39). The coming of the Helper was the proof that Christ's atoning work was perfected, and that the Father, Son, and Spirit, were all most desirous that men should be helped into possession of the present and eternal fruits of the saving work of Jesus Christ.

II. His Mission in the World. "I will send Him unto you; and He, when He is come, He will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (v. 8, R.V.). While the Spirit's attitude to the Church is that of an Helper, His attitude to the world is that of a Convicter. There are three things the world needs to be convicted of: Sin, righteousness, and judgment.

1. "Of SIN, because they believe not on Me" (v. 9). The great sin of the world, in the eyes of the Holy Spirit, is unbelief—believing not the Son of God. His mission is to glorify Christ (v. 14), and the first thing He does is to convict of the sin of rejecting His Word and sacrifice.

2. "Of RIGHTEOUSNESS, because I go to my Father." Christ could not go to His Father until He had gone to the Cross and the grave as an atonement for sin. To go to His Father, He must rise again from the dead. His resurrection and ascension secures for us that righteousness which His death for our sins had prepared. He died for our offences. He rose again for our justification (Romans 4:25). On the Cross He was made sin for us; now at the Father's right hand He is made of God unto us righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30). This is the righteousness that the world needs, and that the Holy Spirit seeks to convict it of. Our own righteousnesses are as filthy rags in His sight.

3. "Of JUDGMENT, because the prince of this world has been judged" (v. 11, r.v.). As surely as the prince of this world (Devil) has already been judged, and brought under condemnation by Christ's death and resurrection, so has every unbeliever. "He who believes not has been judged already" (John 3:18, R.V.). This is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men love the darkness rather than the light. The Spirit has come to convict concerning judgment. All down through these ages the Holy Spirit has been, as it were, prosecuting the world, bringing it to judgment, because of its criminal attitude toward the Son of God. How is this work done? Does the Spirit use any medium, through which He convicts the men of the world? The last clause of verse 7 should surely not be separated in thought from verse 8. "If I depart, I will send Him unto you, and when He is come—unto you—He will convict the world." It was when the Spirit had come with power unto Peter, that the three thousand were "pricked in their heart," on the day of Pentecost. A powerless Christian, or a powerless Church will never be successful in convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. This needed work cannot be done in any other way, but by the Holy Spirit, the Almighty Helper.

III. His Mission to the Church.

To the redeemed of God the Holy Spirit has come—

1. AS A GUIDE INTO ALL TRUTH. "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all the truth" (v. 13, R.V.). He is the Spirit of truth, because He has come out from Him who is "The Truth," in His person and doctrine. He guides into the truth, because the Spirit searches into the deep things of God (2 Corinthians 2:10). O soul, thirsting for the truth as it is in Jesus, receive the guidance of this heavenly Helper; ask Him, and depend upon Him to do it. This holy anointing teaches you all things and is truth (1 John 2:27).

2. AS A REVEALER OF THE THINGS OF CHRIST. "He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you" (vv. 14, 15). He helps us all He can, by taking the things that are Christ's—by right of His sufferings and death—things purchased for His

people by His own blood; and to declare them, or make them known unto us, that He might glorify the Son, by filling up and making fruitful the lives of His redeemed ones (John 15:8). Blessed Helper, help me to enter into this most precious inheritance. "All things are yours, for you are Christ's."

3. AS AN EXAMPLE OF SELF-ABANDONED SERVICE. "He shall not speak from Himself; but whatever things He shall hear, these shall He speak; and He shall declare unto you the things that are to come" (v. 13, R.V.). His ministry was one of entire self-abnegation. As Christ sought, through self-emptying, to glorify the Father, so the Holy Spirit likewise sought to glorify the Son: we also, through self-renunciation, must honor the Holy Spirit. The Son of God spoke not from Himself (John 14:10, R.V.). Neither did the Holy Spirit, neither should we. Self-will, and self-wisdom, and every other form of self-assertiveness, is a usurping of the Holy Spirit. If we would have the help of the Spirit in our ministry for Christ, we shall not speak from our own authority, but whatever things we shall hear—from Him—these shall we speak, and shall declare the things that are to come.

A LITTLE WHILE. John 16:16-23

In these verses, the words, "A little while," are repeated seven times over, as if they were of special significance. From the fact that our Lord, in explaining the meaning of them, used the parabolic form, we may infer that different applications may be made of them (v. 25). "A little while, and you shall not see Me...and you shall be sorrowful... but I shall see you again, and your heart shall rejoice... and in that day you shall ask Me no question." These precious words may easily have a threefold meaning. As the

I. Historical. "A little while, and you shall not see Me." It was but "a little while"—a few hours—and Christ was buried out of their sight, though in a borrowed grave, yet sealed with the royal signet. The interval between His death and resurrection was, indeed, to them a time of "sorrow" and "lamenting," but to the world a time of rejoicing (Luke 24:17). The world's feasts go on more merrily in the absence of the Savior from sin, but the Christian can find a feast nowhere where He is not. "A little while, and I shall see you again, and your heart shall rejoice." Their hearts did rejoice when, after three days, they saw Him again in resurrection power and glory. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord" (John 20:20). "They worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy." "In that day" they did ask Him no question. The fact of His appearing to them as the Risen One was itself the answer to all their doubts and questionings. He who had power to rise from the dead, had power to perform His every promise. In a dark and cloudy day, the relative value of other lights may be disputed, but when the sun breaks out in all his glorious majesty, there is no questioning his all-sufficiency to meet the need.

II. Personal. "A little while...you shall be sorrowful...but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice... in that day you shall ask no question." The sorrowful "little while" of His called-out ones is now, while their Lord is absent, and the world is rejoicing. "In the world you shall have tribulation" (v. 33), but His "I will see you again" is the hope of his suffering saints. Through the gathering gloom we look for the breaking of the day, when we shall see Him face to face. Just now we may see as but through a glass darkly; there are many things that we cannot possibly understand, mysterious movements of the providence of God, and of the Holy Spirit, that at times sorely perplex our eager spirits, many things we should like explained. Yes, but "in that day you shall ask Me no question." One look into the glorified face of our redeeming Lord will hush at once every restless feeling and every anxious thought. So satisfied shall we be when we see Him, that we shall not be able to ask Him any question. So perfect will be our acquiescence to His will in everything.

"Not a surge of worry, not a shade of care,
Not a blast of hurry moves the spirit there."

III. Dispensational. These words of our Lord may also be prophetic of that time when He will come again, taking to Himself His right to rule and reign over this world for which He died. The Church of God is now passing through its "little while" of sorrow, this is its time to "weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice." In the latter days perilous times will come. But the Church's hope lies in His promise, "I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man takes from you." She, like a woman in travail, has sorrow now, but when the Man is born into the world, she shall remember no more her anguish for joy (v. 21). God's people just now are sadly divided and full of questionings, but on that day when He shall appear in the glory of His power, as King of kings and Lord of lords, "you shall ask no questions." All human questionings are forever set at rest in the presence of the glorified Son of God. Angels ask Him no questions, but it is our great privilege now to "Ask that we may receive" (v. 23).

CHRIST'S GIFTS TO HIS OWN. John 17

In approaching this chapter we feel as if we were passing through the veil into the holiest of all. This prayer of our Great High Priest, just before He offered Himself upon the altar of the Cross as the sacrifice for the sin of the world, is in itself a great unveiling of holy things. Here every petition is a revelation, every declaration a discovery. From these—Christ's own words—we shall note first of all

some of the blessings He has conferred upon His own. Observe the—

I. Life of God. "You have given Him authority over all flesh, that...to them He should give eternal life" (v. 2, R.V.). This eternal life consists in knowing God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (v. 3). To know Him is to be made a partaker of His nature, to be adopted into His family as "sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty." When Christ condescended to take upon Him the likeness of sinful flesh, God gave Him authority over all flesh, that He might give this life to all who believe.

II. Name of God. "I have manifested Your Name unto the men whom You gave Me out of the world" (v. 6). The life and work of Jesus Christ was "the Lord proclaiming the Name of the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth." In manifesting the Name of God, He was manifesting His nature. He could truly say, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father." But only those given Him "out of the world" could receive this gracious revelation. "The world by wisdom knew not God."

III. Words of God. "I have given them the words which You gave Me" (v. 8). This thought is frequently expressed in this Gospel (chaps. 12:49; 14:10). Those who have been made alive unto God must feed upon the words of the Living God. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." Christ Himself is the truth, because the words He spoke were the very words and doctrines taught Him by the Eternal Father. "I and My Father are One." One in nature and in purpose, One in will, in deed, and in truth. "The words that I speak unto you are spirit and life." As He lived by faith in those words given Him, so shall we. "Believe, and you shall see."

IV. Service of God. "I am glorified in them" (v. 10). As the Father was glorified in the Son (v. 4), so the Son is to be glorified in His own. The words of God have been given us as they were given to Jesus Christ His Son, for a very definite and gracious purpose, that God might be glorified in faithful and successful service (v. 4). The privilege of working for Him is a precious gift. Alas, that so many should neglect to stir up this gift. How is Christ to be glorified in us unless there is wholehearted surrender to His will and work, as He was to the will and work which the Father gave Him to do? Was not this what the apostle meant when he said, "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death?" (Philippians 1:20).

V. Glory of God. "And the glory which You have given Me I have given unto them" (v. 22, R.V.). What glory was this that Christ received from God the Father, and passed on to His disciples? Did not this glory consist in God's nature and Name, His words and work, which were given to the Son, and which in grace He has imparted to His followers? As He is, so are we. There is, besides, the glory that is yet to be revealed when we shall be with Him where He is (v. 24). As God gave Him the glory of Sonship and heirship, so has He given this glory to us who believe (John 1:12). The purpose of this manifold gift is, "that they all may be one," even as Christ and the Father are One (v. 22). What would be the results if this glory was really witnessed by the world?

VI. Love of God. "I made known unto them Your Name, and will make it known that the love with which You loved Me may be in them" (v. 26). Christ has made known, and will go on making known the Name (character) of God, that His nature which is love may be continually nurtured in us. This He does by the gift of the Holy Spirit, who sheds this love abroad in our hearts (Romans 5:5). It is surely a heart-searching thought that our Lord should close His great unveiling priestly prayer with this testimony, that the purpose for which He had faithfully declared the Name of God was that the love which God had for His Son might be in us. Has this grace of the Lord Jesus Christ been in vain to us? Are we rejoicing in the depth, the fullness, and the eternity of this love? Is this love being revealed to others through us, as it has been revealed through Christ to us?

CHRIST'S PETITIONS FOR HIS OWN. John 17

This is one of the chapters of which Baxter in his "Saint's Rest" says, "It is of more value than all the other books in the world." But the veil that is over the heart needs to be taken away, before the hidden glory can be seen. This is not a prayer for the world. "I pray not for the world." His cry for the perishing world came out of His agonized heart while hanging on the Cross (Luke 23:34). Here He pleads for those that had been given Him out of the world. He prayed that they might be—

I. Kept by the Father. "Holy Father, keep them in Your own Name which You have given Me" (v. 11). To be kept in His own Name is to be kept in His own character and likeness; is to be continually acknowledged and claimed as His own sons and daughters. They are to be kept in that Name which Christ had manifested to them (v. 6). "The Name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runs into it and are safe" (Proverbs 18:10).

II. Happy in Themselves. "Now I come to You... that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves" (v. 13). He who was the "Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief," was no stranger to that joy which is in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17). If His joy had been in Himself alone, how could He impart it to others? But being in the Holy Spirit, this He could and did give. The Lord's people are not asked to put on a smiling face without possessing a smiling heart. This holy personal joy is the joy of true fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, in the communion of the Holy Spirit (1 John 1:3, 4).

III. Protected from the Devil. "I pray...that You should keep them from the evil one" (v. 15, R.V.). Christ knew, from personal experience, the subtle dangers that lay in being tempted of the Devil, so He prays here that we might be kept from yielding to his deceitful devices. "When you pray, say, Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13, R.V.). "He who is begotten of God keeps Him, and the evil one touches him not" (1 John 5:18, R.V.). While we by faith keep hold of Him who has destroyed the works of the Devil, God will keep us by His mighty power from the evil one.

IV. Holy unto God. "Sanctify them in Your truth... for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be truly sanctified" (vv. 17, 19, margin). As He consecrated, or set Himself apart for us, He prays that we may be consecrated (set apart) for Him, He says, "As the Father sent Me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world" (v. 18). He delivered the same message to His disciples after His resurrection (John 20:21). You are not your own, you are, in the purpose of His grace, separated unto Himself, "therefore glorify God in your body and your spirit, which are His."

V. Useful unto Others. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe in Me through their word" (v. 20). Then Christ expected that others would believe on His Name through them; that the "other sheep" which were not of this little fold, were to hear His voice "through their word," and be brought into the one flock under the one Shepherd (John 10:16). Let your light so shine—that light which He has shined into your hearts—that others, seeing the good works of God in you, may glorify your Father which is in Heaven. He has blessed us, that we might be made a blessing. Let us see that the Holy One is not limited in His saving grace by our unbelief (Psalm 78:41).

VI. United One to Another. He prayed also, "That they all may be one" (v. 21). There is here a double union. His request to the Father is that as brethren, they might be one in themselves, and as sons, they might be "one in us..as You Father are in Me, and I in You." How blessed Christian fellowship would be, if it resembled the fellowship that exists between the Father and the Son. That they may be one as we are, is the longing of Christ's heart (Galatians 3:28). The anticipated outcome of this is, "That the world may believe that You have sent Me." The world still needs to know that love of God which sent His Son to save it (John 3:16).

VII. Glorified with Christ. "Father, I will that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory" (v. 24). When He shall appear, we shall be like Him. Here we are more familiar with the sufferings of Christ than with the glory which is now His with the Father; but our afflictions, which are light compared with His, are working out for us as His afflictions wrought out for Him, "an exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified together with Him. Our eyes have often been dimmed with tears while beholding His sufferings, but all tears shall be wiped away and every heart questioning hushed when we behold His glory. We cannot say of the prayers of Christ, as with the prayers of David, that "they are ended," for they are still being fulfilled. May we, through our sanctified lives, help to give Him these desires of His heart.

THE CHRISTIAN'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORLD. John 17

I. They are Taken Out of the World. "The men which You gave Me out of the world " (v. 6). The world, as such, is a ruined mass, lying in the lap of the evil one; being coddled by the illusions and guided by the false principles of the God of this world; but the followers of Jesus Christ have in spirit been lifted up out of the whole thing, as out of an horrible pit and miry clay, and have been established in the Kingdom of our God, and of His Christ, which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. "You are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

II. They are Distinguished from the World. "I pray for them: I pray not for the world" (v. 9). As soon as we become separated in spirit from the world, we come under a new set of laws in the Kingdom of grace. We are dealt with as children of God, not as the mere offspring of His creative power. Christ loves His own with a love which is peculiar to His own. While He has the love of pity for the world, He has the love of pleasure for His own. Because they are in heart for Him, He in heart and power is for them; so all things work together for good to them that love Him.

III. They are In the World. "But these are in the world" (v. 11). As to their spirit and purpose, they are out of the world, but as to their bodily presence and influence, they are still in the world. In the world, but not of it, even as Christ was (v. 16). In the world, not as a branch in the vine, but as a light in the darkness; not as a member in the body, but as a physician in the hospital. In the world, not as a "man of the world," but as a "man of God"; not as its slave, but as its victor.

IV. They are Hated by the World. "The world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (v. 14). There was no hatred until He had given them the Word of God. "I have given them Your Word, and the world has hated them." This God-given Word, when received, so revolutionized their minds and hearts that the world did not know them, and so contrary did they become to the world's ways and maxims that they hated them. The worldly wise and the worldly prudent cannot receive those precious things which God is prepared to reveal unto babes (Matthew 11:25). The hatred of the world is a trifling matter to those

whose hearts are filled with the love of God.

V. They are Kept from the God of this World. "I pray..that You should keep them from the evil one" (v. 15, R.V.). He does not pray that we should be taken out of this world, but kept from the evil one who rules in it. We need not weary to get out of this world so long as we can be made a perpetual miracle and monument of His keeping power in it. We are surely at perfect liberty to claim, for the honor of Christ's own Name, the daily fulfillment of this prayer in our own lives. Our beloved gourds may wither, but His promise cannot.

VI. They are Sent Into the World. "As You have sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (v. 18). Every Spirit-anointed one is sent to preach good tidings (Luke 4:18). As Christ was sent into the world to seek and save that which was lost, so also are we. As He was an ambassador for God, so also are we for Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). As He was not sent on His own charges, so neither are we. As He was in the world, not on His own account but as a Sent One, so are we. Those sent by Him will be equipped by Him for the work, as He was equipped by the Father which sent Him. "As My Father has sent Me, even so send I you" (John 20:21).

VII. They are Indwelt for the Salvation of the World. "I in them, and You in Me....that the world may know" (v. 23). As the Father was in the Son, so the Son desires to be in us, that the world may know the love of God. Christ fulfilled, in a perfect manner, all required of Him, but what miserable counterfeits many of us are. The Son has given Himself as freely to us as the Father gave Himself to the Son, that His great love might triumph in us and through us. As God so loved the world that He gave His Son, so does the Son so love the world that He gives His Spirit-filled followers, and for the self-same purpose. "Christ lives in me," says Paul (Galatians 2:20), and all the world knows to what a God-honoring result. The one thing needful that this world needs to know is the Love of God; not only God's love to the world, but His love to His Son, and to them that love Him. "That You have loved them as You have loved Me." May this love be shed abroad in our hearts, and out through our hearts into this cold Christ-neglecting world around us.

REVELATIONS IN THE GARDEN. John 18:1-11

Every circumstance in which Jesus Christ was placed, somehow or other, became the occasion of a further revelation of His wondrous character. Wherever He was, He, in His unique Personality, could not be hid. In these few verses we see some rays of His heavenly glory breaking through the dark cloud of His earthly weakness. Here is a revelation of—

I. His Habit of Prayer. "Judas...knew the place; for Jesus oft-times resorted thither with His disciples" (v. 2). Although Christ possessed the spirit of prayer, He believed also in the place of prayer. When one gets familiar with their surroundings, the mind is more free for fellowship with the unseen and eternal. In the matter of frequent praying, as well as in suffering, the sinless Son of God has left us an example.

II. His Knowledge of the Future. "Jesus therefore, knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth" (v. 4, R.V.). He knew that "all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished," for the Scriptures must be fulfilled (Luke 18:31). Our knowledge of the future must be derived from the same source. If we had the faith that Jesus Christ had in those words uttered by men full of the Holy Spirit, then would we be among those wise men which discern the signs of the times.

III. His Confession Concerning Himself. "I am He" (v. 5). They declared that they were seeking Jesus of Nazareth. He confessed that He was that Nazarene. Reproach had been associated with that Name, and He willingly accepts it and bears it. It was as if they said, "Where is that despised and rejected One?" He answered, "I am He." This solemn "I am He" of the Son of God may be looked upon as His answer to all who seek Him, whether through love and mercy, or hate and derision. It is with Him all have to do.

IV. His Power Over His Enemies. "As soon as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground" (v. 6). It was good for them that they had the ground to fall on. The same power that drove them back might have as easily driven them into Hell. This manifestation of His power was His last convincing proof that, apart from His own will, they had no power at all against Him. "No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself" (John 10:18).

V. His Love for His Own. "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way" (v. 8). These words are full of solemn significance, as they reveal Christ's attitude toward the powers of darkness and the sheep of His pasture. He was no hireling to flee when the wolf comes. What He here said to His enemies He could say with a deeper meaning to that "death and the curse" which was coming upon Him. "If, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way." As our Substitute and Surety, His chief desire was the salvation of His people. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes.

VI. His Submission to His Father's Will. "The cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" (v. 11). He knew the Father's love too well to refuse even that awful cup of suffering that was just now being put into His hands. He was so perfectly at one with the Father's purposes that His meat was to do His will and to finish His work. As the weapons of His warfare were not carnal, neither

are ours, yet they are mighty, through obedience to God, to the pulling down of strongholds. By His surrender and obedience unto death, He triumphed in resurrection power. He has left us an example that we should follow His steps.

CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS AT THE HANDS OF MEN. John 18

He suffered by being—

I. Betrayed by the Hypocritical. "Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them" (v. 5). He who companied with Christ, and shared the fellowship of His disciples, now takes his stand among the enemies of his Lord, and lends his influence towards His downfall. "Woe unto you hypocrites."

II. Defended by the Passionate. "Simon Peter having a sword, drew it and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear" (v. 10). The Lord had as little need for Peter's passion as for his sword. The wrath of man works not for the praise of God. There is a zeal for Christ and His cause that must be more painful than pleasing unto Him.

III. Smitten by the Unreasonable. "Jesus answered, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smite you Me?" (v. 23). It is easier for pride and prejudice to sneer and to smite than to face the truth. Self-seeking men are ever ready to justify themselves if it should be at the cost of smiting the character of the Savior. But the clouds that would hide the face of the sun cannot hinder its progress.

IV. Denied by the Cowardly. When Simon Peter was charged with being "One of His disciples, he denied it, and said, I am not" (v. 25). The Lord and His cause still suffers much through the cowardliness of His professed followers. There are other ways than Peter's in denying Christ. He did it with his tongue; we may do it with our feet, or by our general conduct. When the act or behavior is more in keeping with the enemies of Christ than with His Word and teaching it is practically a denial of Him.

V. Shunned by the Self-righteous. "Then led they Jesus...unto the hall of judgment...and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be denied, but that they might eat the Passover" (v. 28). Anything or place was clean enough for Jesus, but they must preserve their (supposed) ceremonial holiness. "They strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." This is what one has called "putid hypocrisy." These, like all other self-righteous bigots, would seek the blessing without the Blessor; they would have the Passover without Him who is the Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7). They are like men crying for light and closing their eyes to the sun.

VI. Questioned by the Ambitious. Pilate asked three questions of Jesus, and profited nothing by them: (1) "Are You the King of the Jews?" (v. 33); (2) "What is truth?" (v. 38); (3) "Whence are You?" (chapter 19:9). By such questions the Christ was "oppressed and afflicted," so He "opened not His mouth." Men animated by selfish and impure motives still oppress Him, whose Divinity is clear as the sun, by their questionings regarding His character and teaching. He who does His will shall know of the teaching whether it be of God (John 7:17).

VII. Mocked by the Frivolous. "The soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head....and said, Hail, King of the Jews" (chapter 19:2). These men of war set Him who is the Prince of Peace at naught (Luke 23:11). To them the kingdom of Caesar is everything, the Kingdom of God nothing, material things important, but spiritual things ridiculed and laughed at. Truly they know not what they do, who trifle with the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rev 1:17, 18).

"I have seen the face of Jesus,
Tell me not of anything beside;
I have heard the voice of Jesus,
All my soul is satisfied."

MARY MAGDALENE. John 20:1-18

John was that disciple whom Jesus loved, but Mary Magdalene was surely that disciple who pre-eminently loved Jesus. She loved much because she had been forgiven much (Luke 8:2). Behold her—

I. Anxiety. She came "early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulcher" (v. 1). The darkness without was nothing to her who had had the lamp of heavenly love burning in her heart. Was it only to see the sepulcher she came? Was there not a tremulous restlessness about her feelings that some unusual thing was about to happen?

II. Disappointment. "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid Him" (v. 2). It never was more blessedly true than in this case, that our disappointment is God's appointment. In search for a dead Lord, she finds but an empty grave. He is "away" not that she might lose Him but that she might—to her heart's satisfaction—find Him.

III. Sorrow. "Mary stood at the sepulcher weeping" (vv. 11-13). Peter and John, at her report, ran together to the sepulcher and looked in and returned again to their own home, but Mary stood, as one bound to that tomb by the cords of faith and love. So intense were her desires, and so blinded were her eyes by sorrow, that "the angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain," never seemed to awaken a suspicion in her mind that the Lord was risen. Yes, it is possible to be so overwhelmed with our imaginary loss that we fail to grasp God's greatest blessing.

IV. Mistake. "She supposing Him to be the gardener," etc. (v. 15). Even in resurrection power our Lord had still the likeness of sinful flesh. Why did she not know Him? The likelihood is that she was so perfectly absorbed in thought that she was blind to all outward objects— "Swallowed up with overmuch grief." The love of her heart was all right, but the theory of her head was all wrong. It will save us much sorrow and disappointment to have a correct creed as well as a devoted life. He was risen, as He said, but they believed Him not.

V. Discovery. "Jesus says unto her, Mary. She turned herself and says unto Him, Rabboni" (Master) (v. 16). She needed to have her eyes turned away from herself and from the grave, to see Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. The word of Jesus caught her ear and sunk into her heart. He called her by her name and claimed her as His own (Isaiah 43:1). His sheep hear His voice. No one who ever seeks the Lord Jesus Christ ever finds a dead or powerless Savior. The deepest cry of a living soul is for a living God (Psalm 42:2).

VI. Boldness. "Touch Me not" (v. 17). She evidently fell down and was about to embrace His feet, when Jesus stood back saying, "Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father." Another little disappointment to her ardent heart and another lesson to her that she must learn to walk by faith and not by sight. No mortal hand was allowed to touch Him, who died as the sinner's Substitute, until He had presented Himself to His Father for acceptance as our Redeemer and High Priest. Afterwards every doubting Thomas was invited to thrust his hand into His side that he might feel the mark left by the spear wound.

VII. Obedience. "Jesus said unto her, Go to My brethren and say unto them...Mary came and told the disciples" (vv. 17, 18). She tarried in the garden until she was endued with the power of a great commission. What a message was Mary's, the Gospel of Sonship; "My Father, and your Father," in the power of the Resurrection. Her love is rewarded by being made the first herald of His resurrection power. "He who loves Me...I will manifest Myself unto him." The vision of the glorified Christ makes a willing servant (Acts 9:6).

DOUBTING THOMAS. John 20:24-29

That evening of the first day of the first resurrection week was an ever memorable one. The hearts of the disciples were full of fear and wonder at the things which had happened (v. 18). They had met with closed and bolted doors, for fear of their enemies, to reconsider the whole situation. But He who died to save them set all their doubtings and their fears at rest, by suddenly appearing among them, speaking peace and breathing into them a foretaste of Pentecostal power and blessing. All Christ's acts here are full of significance. (1) He spoke the word of "Peace" to them; (2) He revealed Himself as the Crucified One (v. 20); (3) He Commissioned them (v. 21); (4) He Endued them (v. 22); (5) He promised them success in His business (v. 23). Now what about Thomas? If Peter was rash with his tongue, Thomas was slow in his mind (chapter 14:5). Observe his—

I. Lost Opportunity. "But Thomas.. was not with them when Jesus came" (v. 24). Why he was absent is not stated, but it is at least suggestive that he was absent. He must have known of the meeting, but being incredulous regarding the resurrection of Christ, he probably had given up all hope, feeling utterly perplexed and ashamed. In refusing to assemble with His brethren he only strengthened his unbelief and lost the faith-confirming fellowship of the Lord. Those out of fellowship with the body of believers need not expect to enjoy the fellowship of Christ.

II. Emphatic Denial. When the disciples said unto him, "We have seen the Lord," he said, "Except I see.... I will not believe" (v. 25). He was faithless (v. 27). His heart was hardened against the truth of "the resurrection." His "I will not" reveals the desperate antagonism that was in his nature. He would walk by sight, not by faith. It is little short of madness to set one's self against the united testimony of the disciples of Jesus Christ. The imperious "I will not believe" of the haughty and prejudiced mind can never make the faith of God of none effect. "Believe, and you shall see."

III. Humbling Rebuke. Thomas gained nothing but sadness and separation from his independent attitude. He did not, however, miss the next meeting of the disciples, "after eight days," for "Thomas was with them." Again Jesus appeared and says to Thomas, "Reach hither your finger...and be not faithless, but believing" (v. 27). He had now, according to the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, an opportunity of "handling the Word of Life," but as soon as He comes within touch, the hand of unbelief is paralyzed. What the disciples could not do in a week's reasoning, Jesus Christ did in a moment by His Word. Unbelief is the most shameful of all things when Christ Himself is seen. How Thomas must afterward have repented over his treatment of the testimony of his believing friends.

Are we not losing much blessing just now for the same reason, refusing to believe those who have experienced a fullness of blessing to which we, in our unbelief, are utter strangers? May He so reveal Himself to us that every doubt will be ashamed before Him.

IV. Confession of Faith. "Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God." He has seen, and he has believed, but the blessedness of the man who has not seen and yet has believed could never be his (v. 29). However, he has believed, and that with all his heart. His words were few, but profound, and came from the uttermost depths of His soul. There was in them a confession—

1. Of His DEITY. "My God."
2. Of His AUTHORITY over him. "My Lord."
3. Of his PERSONAL SURRENDER to Him. "My Lord and My God."

HOW JESUS SHOWED HIMSELF. John 21:1-14

After His resurrection no one could see Jesus through mere curiosity or by accident. Neither Mary nor the two men who walked with Him on the way to Emmaus knew Him until He revealed Himself to them. None but disciples ever saw Him in His resurrection body. The vision now is a spiritual one; only those who believe shall see the glory of God in the Person of the risen Christ. "On this wise showed He Himself" on that memorable morning.

1. The Time. It was—

1. AFTER A NIGHT OF FAILURE. "That night they caught nothing" (v. 3). In those days of quiet testing. Peter got somewhat restless and said, "I go a-fishing. They say unto him, We also go with you." They followed Peter, and they caught nothing. Disappointment and defeat may prepare us for a new manifestation of the grace and power of Jesus Christ. To labor without His presence and blessing is like putting our treasure in a bag with holes. Failure in business may be a good preparation for spiritual success.

2. AT THE BREAKING OF THE DAY. "When the day was now breaking, Jesus stood on the shore" (v. 4, R.V.). Sorrow may endure for the night, but joy comes in the morning when He appears He was there, but they knew Him not There is always the breaking of a new day when Christ shows Himself afresh to the weary soul. Every vision of Him is a new and fuller dawning of the heavenly day.

II. The Manner. Our Lord followed the example of no man. He had His own unique way of showing both Himself and His doctrine. He began to reveal Himself by—

1. LEADING THEM TO CONFESSION. "Children, have you anything to eat? They answered Him, No!" (v. 5, R.V.). This was an honest confession of failure. They had taken nothing, so they made no attempt to make it look like something. They had nothing, neither for themselves nor for others, and they said so; and by so doing put themselves in a position to be blessed by the Lord. Beware of misrepresentation and exaggeration. Christ is interested in our reports.

2. TESTING THEIR FAITH. "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find" (v. 6). They had toiled all night to no purpose, and now that the day was breaking they had given up all hope. But the authoritative voice of that stranger on the shore, so full of promise, was heard, and immediately obeyed. There is always a ring of certainty about the Word of the Lord Jesus. To hear it is to have our hearts tested by it.

3. TURNING FAILURE INTO SUCCESS. "They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes" (v. 6). They obeyed, and their faith was abundantly rewarded. By this sign which followed, John was constrained to say, "It is the Lord." This is the Lord's doing; John feels that it is so like Him. Yes, it is just Christ-like to turn our total defeat into unprecedented success, through the giving of His Word and the believing of it. It is in "this wise" that sinners are converted, and fruitless Christians made wise to win souls.

4. PROVIDING FOR THEIR WANTS. "As soon as they came to land they saw a fire of coals, a fish, and a loaf" (v. 9, R.V., margin). Even in His resurrection body the Lord was not unmindful of the bodies of His cold and hungry disciples. This is another revelation of His love and care for His own. It was not, perhaps, a sumptuous feast, but it was according to His manner as the Shepherd of His flock. "The Lord is My Shepherd, I shall not want." "My God shall supply all your need" (Philippians 4:19). The Son of God is always before us in His providential arrangements.

5. HAVING FELLOWSHIP WITH THEM. "Jesus said unto them, Come and break your fast..Jesus then comes and takes bread, and gives them, and fish likewise" (v. 12, 13). Now, "none of the disciples dared ask Him, Who are You?" None but the Lord Himself could act in this manner, showing such grace and power. Christ has a way of giving, whereby He Himself is made known (Luke

24:30, 31). He gave Himself for us. The law demands, but the grace of God that has come to us in Christ Jesus delights to give. It is an ever memorable experience to have our long spiritual fast broken by the blessings provided for us, and offered to us by Him who died for us and rose again. Eat, O friends! Come and dine. "Behold, all things are now ready" (Matthew 22:4).

"IF I WILL". John 21:15-22

After they had dined, the Lord showed Himself in another way to Peter, when He searched the secrets of his heart with that threefold question, "Love you Me?" This was Peter's final examination for the Gospel ministry. It had to do with the heart more than the head. It was a test of love. There can be no truly educated ministry without a wholehearted devotion to the Person of Jesus Christ. It was because of Peter's confession of love he received his commission to serve, "Feed My lambs." After the Lord had signified to Peter by what painful death he should glorify God, Peter made no protest, accepting it at once as the good will of God, but he became anxious to know how John was to end his earthly journey, "What shall this man do?" Jesus said, "If I will that he tarry until I come, what is that to you? Follow you Me." This reply of Christ to Peter's question of curiosity is a further revelation of His unique methods and matchless character. "If I will." This is an I that stretches from the deepest depths to the highest heights; its arms reach out to all time past and to the eternity to come. These words of Christ are a revelation to us of His—

I. Views of Life. His eye was always on the great essentials of true existence. He allowed no place for mere personal curiosity. "What is that to you? Follow you Me." Here is the true center around which our lives should move, and from which they must receive their guiding and inspiring principles. We must be more anxious to follow Christ than to contrast our experience with the experience of others, either in their life or in their death.

II. Methods of Working. "If I will that he tarry... what is that to you?" His dealings with His disciples is not in any stiff mechanical fashion, not after the rigid law of uniformity. The wealth of Christ's wisdom and power cannot permit of this. Each individual disciple will have His special consideration and providence. He calls His own sheep by name, which means nature, and will deal with them for their highest good and His highest glory.

III. Divine Power. "If I will." What a will this is! What a refuge for the weary trembling soul! His will is not a burden for us to carry, but a pillow on which to rest. Think of the dignity, authority, almightiness, that lie in these words, like strength in a giant's limb. He has but to will and it shall be done, for His will is done in Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. If He wills to bless you and keep you, then you shall be blessed and kept. How safe and right our life is when yielded to His will!

IV. Abiding Presence. "Follow you Me." By His Word and Spirit, lo, He is with us always, even to the end of the age. He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. "Follow you Me." Is this possible now that He is risen in newness of life, and seated in heavenly glory? Yes. It is His will. Whatever is His will for us is possible to us. Think of the privilege of following Him whom angels delight to honor, and of the tremendous possibilities associated with such a life.

V. Second Advent. "Until I come" (v. 22). This is at least the third time in this Gospel that our Lord definitely refers to His coming again (chaps. 14:3; 16:22). Throughout the New Testament there are something like 603 references to this subject. He has come as a suffering Savior. He shall come as a glorious King. The hope of the Church is the Cross of Christ, the hope of the world lies in the throne of Christ. When He comes again it will not be in grace, but to assert His right and reign. "Then the kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ." Blessed hope! This heavy-laden world, staggering on through the ages with its ever-gathering burden of sin and woe into ever-deepening darkness, shall, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, be saved and filled with His glory (Hebrews 10:37).