

# EXPOSITORY THOUGHTS ON THE GOSPELS.

FOR FAMILY AND PRIVATE USE.

WITH THE TEXT COMPLETE,  
And many Explanatory Notes.

BY THE REV. J. C. RYLE, B. A.,

CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD,  
VICAR OF STRADBROKE, SUFFOLK;  
*Author of "Home Truths," etc.*

ST. JOHN. VOL. III.

LONDON:  
WILLIAM HUNT AND COMPANY, 23, HOLLES STREET,  
CAVENDISH SQUARE.  
IPSWICH: WILLIAM HUNT, TAVERN STREET.

1873AD

JOHN XIV. 27–31.

27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.	to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.
23 Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come <i>again</i> unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father; for my Father is greater than I.	30 Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.
29 And now I have told you before it come	31 But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

WE ought not to leave the closing portion of this wonderful chapter without noticing one striking feature in it. That feature is the singular frequency with which our Lord uses the expression, “My Father,” and “the Father.” In the last five verses we find it four times. In the whole chapter it occurs no less than twenty-two times. In this respect the chapter stands alone in the Bible.

The reason of this frequent use of the expression, is a deep subject. Perhaps the less we speculate and dogmatize about it the better. Our Lord was one who never spoke a word without a meaning, and we need not doubt there was a meaning here. Yet may we not reverently suppose that He desired to leave on the minds of His disciples a strong impression of his entire unity with the Father? Seldom does our Lord lay claim to such high dignity, and such power of giving and supplying comfort to His Church, as in this discourse. Was there not, then, a fitness in His continually reminding His disciples that in all His *giving* He was one with the Father, and in all His *doing* did nothing without the Father? This, at any rate, seems a fair conjecture. Let it be taken for what it is worth.

We should observe, for one thing, in this passage, *Christ’s last legacy to His people*. We find Him saying, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you.”

Peace is Christ’s peculiar gift to His people. He seldom gives them money or worldly ease, or temporal prosperity. These are at best very questionable possessions. They often do more harm than good to the soul. They act as clogs and weights to our spiritual life. Inward peace of conscience, arising from a sense of pardoned sin and reconciliation with God, is a far greater blessing. This peace is the property of all believers, whether high or low, rich or poor.

The peace which Christ gives He calls “my peace.” It is specially His own to give, because He bought it by his own blood, purchased it by His own substitution, and is appointed by the Father to dispense it to a perishing world. Just as Joseph was sealed and commissioned to give corn to the starving Egyptians, so is Christ specially commissioned, in the counsels

of the Eternal Trinity, to give peace to mankind. (John vi. 27.)

The peace that Christ gives is not given as the world gives. What He gives, the world cannot give at all, and what He gives is given neither unwillingly, nor sparingly, nor for a little time. Christ is far more willing to give than the world is to receive. What He gives He gives to all eternity, and never takes away. He is ready to give abundantly above all that we can ask or think. "Open thy mouth wide," He says, "and I will fill it." (Eph. iii. 20; Psalm lxxxix. 10.)

Who can wonder that a legacy like this should be backed by the renewed emphatic charge, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid?" There is nothing lacking on Christ's part for our comfort, if we will only come to Him, believe, and receive. The chief of sinners has no cause to be afraid. If we will only look to the one true Saviour, there is medicine for every trouble of heart. Half our doubts and fears arise from dim perceptions of the real nature of Christ's Gospel.

We should observe, for another thing, in this passage, *Christ's perfect holiness*. We find Him saying, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me."

The meaning of these remarkable words admits of only one interpretation. Our Lord would have his disciples know that Satan, "the prince of this world," was about to make his last and most violent attack on Him. He was mustering all his strength for one more tremendous onset. He was coming up with his utmost malice to try the second Adam in the garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross of Calvary. But our blessed Master declares, "He hath nothing in Me."—"There is nothing he can lay hold on. There is no weak and defective point in Me. I have kept my Father's commandment, and finished the work He gave me to do. Satan, therefore, cannot overthrow Me. He can lay nothing to my charge. He cannot condemn Me. I shall come forth from the trial more than conqueror."

Let us mark the difference between Christ and all others who have been born of woman. He is the only one in whom Satan has found "nothing." He came to Adam and Eve, and found weakness. He came to Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and all the saints, and found imperfection. He came to Christ, and found "nothing" at all. He was a Lamb "without blemish and without spot," a suitable Sacrifice for a world of sinners, a suitable Head for a redeemed race.

Let us thank God that we have such a perfect, sinless Saviour; that His righteousness is a perfect righteousness, and His life a blameless life. In ourselves and our doings we shall find everything imperfect; and if we had no other hope than our own goodness, we might well despair. But in Christ we have a perfect, sinless, Representative and Substitute. Well may we say, with the triumphant Apostle, "Who shall lay anything to our charge?" (Rom.

viii. 33.) Christ hath died for us, and suffered in our stead. In Him Satan can find nothing. We are hidden in Him. The Father sees us in Him, unworthy as we are, and for His sake is well pleased. (Matt. iii. 17.)

NOTES. JOHN XIV. 27–31.

27.—[*Peace I leave with you.*] In this verse our Lord gives His disciples one more consolation. He bequeaths them as a legacy, “peace;” not riches or worldly honour, but peace,—peace of heart, conscience, and inward man,—peace from a sense of pardoned sin, a living Saviour, and a home in heaven.

Matthew Henry remarks here, “When Christ left the world, He made His will. His soul He bequeathed to His Father, and His body to Joseph. His clothes fell to the soldiers. His mother He left to the care of John. But what should He leave to His poor disciples, who had left all for Him? Silver and gold He had none; but He left them what was far better, His peace.”

[*My peace give I unto you.*] The expression “my peace,” seems to indicate something peculiar in the gift here promised. Does it not mean “a sense of that peace with God which I am purchasing with my blood,—that inward calm and rest of soul which faith in Me procures for believers,—that peace which it is my special prerogative to give to my people”?

[*Not as...world giveth I...you.*] The first and fullest meaning of this sentence seems to lie in the kind of things which Christ gives: “I give you possessions which the world cannot give, because it has not got them to give.” The world can give temporary carnal satisfaction and excitement, and can gratify the passions and afflictions and pride of the natural man. But the world cannot give inward peace and rest of conscience.

Some, however, think that the point of the sentence lies in the manner of the world’s giving,—temporarily, defectively, imperfectly, grudgingly, and the like. But, however true this may be, I prefer the view that the chief point is in the nature of the world’s gifts compared to Christ’s.

[*Let not your heart be troubled.*] This is a repetition of the words which began the long list of consolations in this chapter. “Once more I say to you, in view of the many grounds of comfort which I have just named, do not give way to trouble of heart.”

[*Neither let it be afraid.*] These words are added to the opening charge, not to be “troubled.” They point to a frame of mind which our Lord saw creeping over the disciples: “Let not your heart give way to cowardice. Let it not be fearful.” It is the only place in the New Testament where this word is used.

We need not doubt that the whole of this consoling verse is meant to be the property of all believers in every age.

28.—[*Ye have heard...said...go away.*] This sentence must refer to ch. xiii. 33-36, and xiv. 2, 3, 12. The disciples seem to have understood clearly that our Lord was leaving them, and that seems to have been one chief reason of their trouble and distress.

[*And come...to you.*] I must retain the opinion that this coming refers to the second advent, and not to the resurrection of Christ. “My leaving the world until my second advent, you have heard me plainly teach and declare.”

[*If ye loved...rejoice...go...Father.*] These words mean,—“if you really loved Me with an intelligent love, and thoroughly understood my person, nature, and work, you would rejoice to hear of my leaving the world and going to the Father, because you would see in it the finishing and completion of the work which the Father sent Me to do.” Our Lord cannot of course mean that the disciples did not “love” Him at all, but that they did not rightly and

intelligently love Him; otherwise they would have rejoiced at His completion of His work.

[*For my Father is greater than I.*] This famous sentence has always been an occasion of controversy and dispute. It presents two difficulties.

(a) What did our Lord mean by saying, "My Father is greater than I"? I answer that the words of the Athanasian Creed contain the best reply. Christ is no doubt "equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood." This we may freely and fully admit, and yet not give up a hair's breadth to Arians and Socinians, who always throw this text in our teeth. The enemies of the doctrine of Christ's divinity forget that Trinitarians maintain the humanity of Christ as strongly as His divinity; and never shrink from admitting that while Christ as God is equal to the Father, as man He is inferior to the Father. And it is in this sense that He here says truly, "My Father is greater than I." It was specially spoken of the time of His incarnation and humiliation. When the Word was "made flesh" He took on Him "the form of a servant." This was temporary and and voluntarily assumed inferiority. (Phil. ii. 7.)

(b) But what did our Lord mean by saying that the disciples ought to rejoice at His going to the Father, BECAUSE "the Father is greater than I"? This is a hard knot to untie, and has received different solutions. My own impression is that the meaning must be something of this kind:—"Ye ought to rejoice at my going to the Father, because in so going I shall resume that glory which I had with Him before the world was, and which I laid aside on becoming incarnate. Here on earth, during the thirty-three years of my incarnation, I have been in the form of a servant, and dwelling in a body as one inferior to my Father. In leaving this world I go to take up again the equal glory and honour which I had with the Father before my incarnation; and to lay aside the position of inferiority in which I have tabernacled here below. I go to be once more Almighty with the Almighty, and to share once more my Father's throne, as a Person in that Trinity in which 'none is afore or after other, none is greater or less than another.' I go to receive the kingdom and honour which in eternal counsels the Father has prepared for the Son; and on this account, if you really knew and understood all, you would rejoice at my going. If I had not voluntarily placed myself in a position of inferiority to the Father by becoming man for man's sake, you would have no hope for your souls. But now the work is finished. I return to the Father, and leave my position of inferiority and humiliation, and you ought to rejoice and be glad."

29.—[*And now...told...before...to pass, &c.*] This seems to refer to our Lord's going away. "I have told you plainly that I am leaving you and about to die on the cross, in order that when I do die and go, you may continue believing, and not have your faith shaken."

30.—[*Hereafter...not talk much with you.*] This must mean that our Lord would not talk much more before His crucifixion. The time was short, and the betrayal and suffering drew nigh. It does not refer to the time after our Lord's resurrection, and the forty days before His ascension.

[*For...prince...cometh...nothing in me.*] This means that Satan was drawing nigh for his last final assault on our Lord; and that he would find nothing to lay hold on, and no weak point.

It is very striking to observe that our Lord does not say "Judas, the Romans, the Pharisees are coming." It is only the devil. He, as at the fall, is at the bottom of all. Others are only his tools.

We should note how the devil is called "the prince of this world." He rules and reigns in the hearts of the vast majority of mankind. The whole world "lieth in the wicked one." Of the extent and intensity of Satan's influence on earth, even now we have probably very little idea.

When it says that he “cometh,” we must not suppose that it means “cometh for the first time.” All through our Lord’s earthly ministry He was tempted and assailed and opposed by Satan. It must mean, “He is coming with special violence and bitter wrath to make his last attack on Me both in Gethsemane and on Calvary.” There are evidently degrees at different seasons in the intensity and virulence of Satan’s attacks.

When it says “hath nothing in Me,” it must mean that our Lord’s heart and life were equally without spot of sin. He knew and felt that He the second Adam, had nothing about Him that Satan could lay hold on. No one but Christ our Head could say that. The holiest saint could never say it!

Sanderson observes, “a cunning searcher had pried narrowly into every corner of His life; and if there had been anything amiss, would have been sure to have spied it, and proclaimed it. But he could find nothing.”

- 31.—[*But that the world...so I do.*] This is a somewhat dark and obscure passage. The meaning is probably something of this kind: “I do all I am doing now, and go to the cross voluntarily, though innocent, that the world may have full proof that I love the Father who sent Me to die, and am willing to go through everything which He has commanded Me to go through. Innocent as I am, and without one spot of sin that Satan can lay to my charge. I willingly go forward to the cross, to show how I love the Father’s will, and am determined to do it by dying for sinners.”

[*Arise, let us go hence.*] These words seem to indicate a change of position, and probably mean that our Lord at this point rose from the table where He had been speaking, and walked out towards the garden of Gethsemane. The rest of His discourse He seems to have delivered in the act of walking, without a single interruption from any of the disciples, until the end of the sixteenth chapter.; and then, at some point unknown to us. He probably paused and offered up the prayer of the seventeenth chapter.

This is the view of Cyril and Augustine, and most commentators. Yet Jansenius, Maldonatus, Alford, and some others, think that our Lord never left the house, and only rose from table at this point, and went on with His discourse standing!

Lightfoot, almost alone, maintains the strange and improbable notion that the place where this discourse was delivered was Bethany, that the interval of a week comes into the narrative here, that at the end of this week the paschal supper and the institution of the Lord’s Supper took place, and then came the discourse of the fifteenth chapter.

No commentator perhaps can leave this chapter without deeply feeling how little he knows and understands of the full meaning of much of its contents. May we not however fairly reflect that one great cause of the chapter’s difficulty is man’s entire inability to grasp the great mystery of the union of the Father, the Son and the Spirit in the Trinity? We are continually handling matters which we cannot fully comprehend, and cannot therefore fully explain, and must be content humbly to believe.