

SHORT
EXPOSITORY READINGS
ON THE
GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN.

A SELECTION DESIGNED FOR
Family Reading, Mothers' Meetings, and
District Visitors.

BY THE
RIGHT REV. JOHN CHARLES RYLE, D.D.,
LORD BISHOP OF LIVERPOOL.
Author of "Expository Thoughts on the Gospels" etc.

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LIII.

CHRIST'S EVERLASTING LOVE.

JOHN XIII. 1-5.

“Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.

“And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray Him;

“Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God;

“He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself.

“After that He poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.”

WE learn, from these verses, *what patient and continuing love there is in Christ’s heart towards His people.* It is written that *“having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.”* Knowing perfectly well that they were about to forsake Him shamefully in a very few hours, in full view of their approaching display of weakness and infirmity, our blessed Master did not

cease to have loving thoughts of His disciples. He was not weary of them: He loved them to the last.

The love of Christ to sinners is the very essence and marrow of the Gospel. That He should love us at all, and care for our souls,—that He should love us before we love Him, or even know anything about Him,—that He should love us so much as to come into the world to save us, take our nature on Him, bear our sins, and die for us on the cross,—all this is wonderful indeed! It is a kind of love to which there is nothing like among men. The narrow selfishness of human nature cannot fully comprehend it. It is one of those things which even the angels of God “desire to look into.” (1 Peter i. 12.) It is a truth which Christian preachers and teachers should proclaim incessantly, and never be weary of proclaiming.

But the love of Christ to saints is no less wonderful, in its way, than His love to sinners, though far less considered. That He should bear with all their countless infirmities from conversion until death,—that He should never be tired of their endless inconsistencies and petty provocations,—that He should go on forgiving and forgetting incessantly, and never be provoked to cast them off and give them up,—all this is marvellous indeed! No mother watching over the waywardness of her feeble babe, in the days of its infancy, has her patience so thoroughly tried, as the patience of Christ is tried by Christians. Yet His longsuffering is infinite. His compassions are a well that

is never exhausted. His love is “a love which passeth knowledge.” (Ephes. iii. 19.)

Let no man be afraid of beginning with Christ, if he desires to be saved. The chief of sinners may come to Him with boldness, and trust Him for pardon with confidence. This loving Saviour is One who delights to “receive sinners.” (Luke xv. 2.) Let no man be afraid of going on with Christ, after he has once come to Him and believed. Let him not fancy that Christ will cast him off because of failures and dismiss him into his former hopelessness on account of infirmities. Such thoughts are entirely unwarranted by anything in the Scriptures. Jesus will never reject any servant because of feeble service and weak performance. Those whom He receives He always keeps. Those whom He loves at first He loves at last. His promise shall never be broken, and it is for saints as well as sinners: “Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out” (John vi. 37.)

CHRIST WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET.

JOHN XIII. 6–15.

“Then cometh He to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto Him, Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?”

“Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter,

“Peter saith unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered Him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me.

“Simon Peter saith unto Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

“Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

“For He knew who should betray Him; therefore said He, Ye are not all clean.

“So after He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?”

“Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

“If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet,

“For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you,”

THE verses we have now read conclude the story of our Lord's washing the feet of His disciples, the night before He was crucified. It is a story full of touching interest, which for some wise reason no Evangelist records except St. John. The wonderful condescension of Christ, in doing such a menial action, can hardly fail to strike any reader. The mere fact that the Master should wash the feet of the servants might well fill us with surprise. But the circumstances and sayings which arose out of the action are just as interesting as the action itself.

We should notice, in this passage, *the deep spiritual lessons which lie beneath its surface*. They are three in number, and lie at the very root of religion, though we can only touch them briefly.

For one thing, we learn that all need to be "washed" by Christ: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in Me." No man or woman can be saved unless his sins are washed away in Christ's precious blood. Nothing else can make us clean or acceptable before God. We must be "washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Cor. vi. 11.) Christ must wash us, if we are ever to sit down with saints in glory. Then let us take heed that we apply to Him by faith, wash and become clean. They only are washed who believe.

For another thing, we learn that even those who are cleansed and forgiven need a daily application to the blood of Christ for daily pardon. We cannot pass through

this evil world without defilement. There is not a day in our lives but we fail and come short in many things, and need fresh supplies of mercy. Even “he that is washed needs to wash his feet,” and to wash them in the same fountain where he found peace of conscience when he first believed. Then let us daily use that fountain without fear. With the blood of Christ we must begin, and with the blood of Christ we must go on.

Finally, we learn that even those who kept company with Christ, and were baptized with water as His disciples, were “not all” washed from their sin. These words are very solemn,—“Ye are clean: but not all.” Then let us take heed to ourselves, and beware of false profession. If even Christ’s own disciples were not all cleansed and justified, we have reason to be on our guard. Baptism and Churchmanship are no proof that we are right in the sight of God.

LV.

JUDAS ISCARIOT.

JOHN XIII. 21–30.

“When Jesus had thus said, He was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me,

“Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom He spake.

“Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved.

“Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom He spake.

“He then lying on Jesus’ breast saith unto Him, Lord, who is it?

“Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when He had dipped the sop, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.

“And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest do quickly.

“Now no man at the table knew for what intent He spake this unto him.

“For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor,

“He then having received the sop went immediately out; and it was night.”

THE subject of the verses before us is a very painful one. They describe the last scene between our Lord and Judas Iscariot, before that false apostle betrayed Him. They contain almost the last words which passed between them before they parted for ever in this world. They never seem to have met again on earth, excepting in the garden when our Lord was taken prisoner. Within a short time both the holy Master and the treacherous servant were dead. They will never meet again in the body till the trumpet sounds, and the dead are raised, and the judgment is set, and the books are opened. What an awful meeting will that be!

Let us mark *the power and malignity of our great enemy the devil*. We are told in the beginning of the chapter that he “put it into the heart” of Judas to betray our Lord. We are told here that he “entered into” him. First he suggests: then he commands. First he knocks at the door and asks permission to come in: then, once admitted, he takes complete possession, and rules the whole inward man like a tyrant.

Let us take heed that we are not “ignorant of Satan’s devices.” (2 Cor. ii. 11.) He is still going to and fro in the earth, seeking whom he may devour. He is about our path and about our bed, and spies out all our ways. Our only safety lies in resisting him at the first, and not listening to his first advances. For this we are all responsible. Strong

as he is, he has no power to do us harm, if we cry to the stronger One in heaven, and use the means which He has appointed. It is a standing principle of Christianity, and will ever be found true,—“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (James iv. 7.)

Once let a man begin tampering with the devil, and he never knows how far he may fall. Trifling with the first thoughts of sin,—making light of evil ideas when first offered to our hearts,—allowing Satan to talk to us, and flatter us, and put bad notions into our hearts and minds,—all this may seem a small matter to many. It is precisely at this point that the road to ruin often begins. He that allows Satan to sow wicked thoughts will soon find within his heart a crop of wicked habits. Happy is he who really believes that there is a devil, and, believing, watches and prays daily that he may be kept from his temptations.

Let us mark, also, *the extreme hardness which comes over the heart of a backsliding professor of religion*. This is a thing which is most painfully brought out in the case of Judas Iscariot. One might have thought that the sight of our Lord’s trouble, and the solemn warning, “One of you shall betray Me,” would have stirred the conscience of this unhappy man. But it did not do so. One might have thought that the solemn words, “That thou doest, do quickly,” would have arrested him, and made him ashamed of his intended sin. But nothing seems to have moved him. Like one whose conscience was dead, buried,

and gone, he rises and goes out to do his wicked work, and parts with his Lord for ever.

The extent to which we may harden ourselves by resisting light and knowledge is one of the most fearful facts in our nature. We may become past feeling, like those whose limbs are mortified before they die. We may lose entirely all sense of fear, or shame, or remorse, and have a heart as hard as the nether millstone, blind to every warning, and deaf to every appeal. It is a sore disease, but one which unhappily is not uncommon among professing Christians. None seem so liable to it as those who, having great light and many privileges, deliberately turn their backs on Christ, and return to the world. Nothing seems likely to awaken such people, but the voice of the archangel and the trump of God.

Let us watch jealously over our hearts, and beware of giving way to the beginnings of sin. Happy is he who “feareth always,” and walks humbly with his God. The strongest Christian is the one who feels his weakness most, and cries most frequently, “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe.” (Psalm cxix. 117; Prov. xxviii. 14.)

LVI.

THE GLORY OF THE CROSS.

JOHN XIII. 31, 32.

“Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.

“If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him.”

IN this passage we find the Lord Jesus at last alone with His eleven faithful disciples. The traitor, Judas Iscariot, has left the room, and gone out to do his wicked deed of darkness. Freed from his company, which must needs have been painful, our Lord opens His heart to His little flock more fully than He had ever done before. Speaking to them for the last time before His passion, He begins a discourse which for touching interest surpasses any portion of Scripture.

These words show us *what glory the crucifixion brought both to God the Father and to God the Son*. It seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that this was what our Lord had in His mind when He said, “Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him.”—It is as though He said, “The time of my crucifixion is at hand. My work on earth is finished. An event is about to take place tomorrow, which, however painful to you who love

Me, is in reality most glorifying both to Me and my Father.”

This was a dark and mysterious saying, and we may well believe that the eleven did not understand it. And no wonder! In all the agony of the death on the cross, in all the ignominy and humiliation which they saw afar off, or heard of next day, in hanging naked for six hours between two thieves,—in all this there was no appearance of glory! On the contrary, it was an event calculated to fill the minds of the Apostles with shame, disappointment, and dismay. And yet our Lord’s saying was true.

The crucifixion brought glory to the Father. It glorified His wisdom, faithfulness, holiness, and love. It showed Him wise, in providing a plan whereby He could be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly.—It showed Him faithful in keeping His promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head.—It showed Him holy, in requiring His law’s demands to be satisfied by our great Substitute.—It showed Him loving, in providing such a Mediator, such a Redeemer, and such a Friend for sinful man as His co-eternal Son.

The crucifixion brought glory to the Son. It glorified His compassion, His patience, and His power. It showed Him most compassionate, in dying for us, suffering in our stead, allowing Himself to be counted sin and a curse for us, and buying our redemption with the price of His own blood.—It showed Him most patient, in not dying the common death of most men, but in willingly submitting

to such pains and unknown agonies as no mind can conceive, when with a word He could have summoned His Fathers angels, and been set free.—It showed Him most powerful, in bearing the weight of all the transgressions of the world, and vanquishing Satan, and despoiling him of his prey.

For ever let us cling to these thoughts about the crucifixion. Let us remember that painting and sculpture can never tell a tenth part of what took place on the cross. Crucifixes and pictures at best can only show us a human being agonizing in a painful death. But of the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of the work transacted on the cross,—of God's law honoured, man's sins borne, sin punished in a Substitute, free salvation bought for man,—of all this they can tell nothing. Yet all this lies hid under the crucifixion. No wonder St. Paul cries, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Gal. vi. 14.)