

SHORT  
EXPOSITORY READINGS  
ON THE  
GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN.

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

BY THE  
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LVII.

THE FATHER'S HOUSE.

JOHN XIV. 1-3.

*“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me.*

*“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*

*“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”*

WE have, in this passage, *a very comfortable account of heaven, or the future abode of saints.* It is but little that we understand about heaven while we are here in the body, and that little is generally taught us in the Bible by negatives much more than by positives. But here, at any rate, there are some plain things.

Heaven is “a Father’s house,”—the house of that God of whom Jesus says, “I go to my Father, and your Father.” It is, in a word, home: the home of Christ and Christians. This is a sweet and touching expression. Home, as we all know, is the place where we are generally loved for our own sakes, and not for our gifts or possessions; the place where we are loved to the end, never forgotten, and always welcome. This is one idea of heaven. Believers are in a strange land and at school in this life. In the life to come they will be at home.

Heaven is a place of “mansions,”—of lasting, permanent, and eternal dwellings. Here in the body we are in lodgings, tents, and tabernacles, and must submit to many changes. In heaven we shall be settled at last, and go out no more. “Here we have no continuing city.” (Heb. xiii. 14.) Our house not made with hands shall never be taken down. (2 Cor. v. 1.)

Heaven is a place of “many mansions.” There will be room for all believers and room for all sorts, for little saints as well as great ones, for the weakest believer as well as for the strongest. The feeblest child of God need not fear there will be no place for him. None will be shut out but impenitent sinners and obstinate unbelievers.

Heaven is a place where Christ Himself shall be present. He will not be content to dwell without His people:—“Where I am, there ye shall be also.” We need not think that we shall be alone and neglected. Our Saviour,—our elder Brother,—our Redeemer, who loved us and gave Himself for us, shall be in the midst of us for ever. What we shall see, and whom we shall see in heaven, we cannot fully conceive yet, while we are in the body. But one thing is certain: we shall see Christ!

Let these things sink down into our minds. To the worldly and careless they may seem nothing at all. To all who feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of God they are full of unspeakable comfort. If we hope to be in heaven it is pleasant to know what heaven is like.

We have, also, in this passage, a *solid ground for expecting good things to come*. The evil heart of unbelief within us is apt to rob us of our comfort about heaven. “We wish we could think it was all true.”—“We fear we shall never be admitted into heaven.”—Let us hear what Jesus says to encourage us.

One cheering word is this,—“I go to prepare a place for you.” Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people: a place which we shall find Christ Himself has made ready for true Christians. He has prepared it by procuring a right for every sinner who believes to enter in. None can stop us, and say we have no business there.—He has prepared it by going before us as our Head and Representative, and taking possession of it for all the members of His mystical body. As our Forerunner He has marched in, leading captivity captive, and has planted His banner in the land of glory.—He has prepared it by carrying our names with Him as our High Priest into the holy of holies, and making angels ready to receive us. They that enter heaven will find they are neither unknown nor unexpected.

Another cheering word is this,—“I will come again and receive you unto myself.” Christ will not wait for believers to come up to Him, but will come down to them, to raise them from their graves and escort them to their heavenly home. As Joseph came to meet Jacob, so will Jesus come to call His people together and guide them to their inheritance. The second advent ought never to be

forgotten. Great is the blessedness of looking back to Christ coming the first time to suffer for us, but no less great is the comfort of looking forward to Christ coming the second time, to raise and reward His saints. (Heb. ix. 25–28.)

Let us leave the whole passage with solemnized feelings and serious self-examination. How much they miss who live in a dying world and yet know nothing of God as their Father and Christ as their Saviour! How much they possess who live the life of faith in the Son of God, and believe in Jesus! With all their weaknesses and crosses, they have that which the world can neither give nor take away. They have a true Friend while they live, and a true home when they die.

LVIII.

THE ONLY WAY TO GOD.

JOHN XIV. 4–11.

*“And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.*

*“Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?*

*“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.*

*“If ye had known Me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him.*

*“Philip saith unto Him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.*

*“Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?*

*“Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works.*

*“Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works’ sake.”*

WE should mark, in these verses, *what glorious names the Lord Jesus gives to Himself.* He says, “I am the way, the

truth, and the life.” The fulness of these precious words can probably never be taken in by man. He that attempts to unfold them does little more than scratch the surface of a rich soil.

Christ is “the way,”—the way to heaven and peace with God. He is not only the guide, and teacher, and law-giver, like Moses; He is Himself the door, the ladder, and the road, through whom we must draw near to God. He has opened the way to the tree of life, which was closed when Adam and Eve fell, by the satisfaction He made for us on the cross. Through His blood we may draw near with boldness, and have access with confidence into God’s presence. (Ephes. iii. 12.)

Christ is “the truth,”—the whole substance of true religion which the mind of man requires. Without Him the wisest heathen groped in gross darkness, and knew nothing rightly about God. Before He came even the Jews saw “through a glass darkly,” and discerned nothing distinctly under the types, figures, and ceremonies of the Mosaic law. Christ is the whole truth, and meets and satisfies every desire of the human mind.

Christ is “the life,”—the sinner’s title to eternal life and pardon, the believer’s root of spiritual life and holiness, the surety of the Christian’s resurrection life. He that believeth on Christ hath everlasting life. He that abideth in Him, as the branch abides in the vine, shall bring forth much fruit. He that believeth on Him, though he were

dead, yet shall he live. The root of all life, for soul and for body, is Christ.

For ever let us grasp and hold fast these truths. To use Christ daily as the way,—to believe Christ daily as the truth,—to live on Christ daily as the life,—this is to be a well-informed, a thoroughly furnished, and an established Christian.

We should mark, again, in these verses, *how expressly the Lord Jesus shuts out all ways of salvation but Himself.* “No man,” He declares, “No man cometh unto the Father but by Me.”

It avails nothing that a man is clever, learned, highly gifted, amiable, charitable, kind-hearted, and zealous about some sort of religion. All this will not save his soul, if he does not draw near to God by Christ’s atonement, and make use of God’s own Son as his Mediator and Saviour. God is so holy that all men are guilty and debtors in His sight. Sin is so sinful that no mortal man can make satisfaction for it. There must be a mediator, a ransom-payer, a redeemer, between ourselves and God, or else we can never be saved. There is only one door, one bridge, one ladder, between earth and heaven,—the crucified Son of God. Whosoever will enter in by that door may be saved; but to him who refuses to use that door the Bible holds out no hope at all. “Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” (Heb. ix. 22.)

Let us beware, if we love life, of supposing that mere earnestness will take a man to heaven, though he know

nothing of Christ. The idea is a deadly and ruinous error. Sincerity will never wipe away our sins. It is not true that every man will be saved by his own religion, no matter what he believes, provided he is diligent and sincere. We must not pretend to be wiser than God. Christ has said, and Christ will stand to it, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me."

LIX.

PRAYER ANSWERED.

JOHN XIV. 12–14.

*“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*

*“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

*“If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”*

WE have, in this passage, a striking promise *about things that Christians may get by prayer*. Our Lord says, “*Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do. . . . If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it*”

These words are a direct encouragement to the simple, yet great duty of praying. Every one who kneels daily before God, and from his heart “says his prayers,” has a right to take comfort in these words. Weak and imperfect as his supplications may be, so long as they are put in Christ’s hands, and offered in Christ’s name, they shall not be in vain. We have a friend at Court, an Advocate with the Father; and if we honour Him by sending all our petitions through Him, He pledges His word that they shall succeed. Of course it is taken for granted that the things we ask are for our souls’ good, and not mere temporal benefits. “Anything” and “whatsoever” do not include health,

and money, and worldly prosperity. These things are not always good for us, and our Lord loves us too well to let us have them. But whatever is really good for our souls, we need not doubt we shall have, if we ask in Christ's name.

How is it that many true Christians have so little? How is it that they go halting and mourning on the way to heaven, and enjoy so little peace, and show so little strength in Christ's service? The answer is simple and plain. "They have not, because they ask not." They have little, because they ask little. They are no better than they are, because they do not ask their Lord to make them better. Our languid desires are the reason of our languid performances. We are not straitened in our Lord, but in ourselves. Happy are they who never forget the words, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." (Ps. lxxxi. 10.) He that does much for Christ, and leaves his mark in the world, will always prove to be one who prays much.

LX.

CHRIST'S SPECIAL GIFT TO HIS PEOPLE.

JOHN XIV. 15-17.

*“If ye love Me, keep my commandments.*

*“And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever;*

*“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you”*

WE have, in this passage, a striking promise *about the Holy Ghost*. Our Lord says, “I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, . . . even the Spirit of truth.”

This is the first time that the Holy Ghost is mentioned as Christ's special gift to His people. Of course we are not to suppose that He did not dwell in the hearts of all the Old Testament saints. But He was given with peculiar influence and power to believers when the New Testament dispensation came in, and this is the special promise of the passage before us. We shall find it useful, therefore, to observe closely the things that are here said about Him.

The Holy Ghost is spoken of as “a Person.” To apply the language before us to a mere influence or inward feeling, is an unreasonable strain of words.

The Holy Ghost is called “the Spirit of truth.” It is His special office to apply truth to the hearts of Christians, to guide them into all truth, and to sanctify them by the truth.

The Holy Ghost is said to be one whom “the world cannot receive and does not know.” His operations are in the strongest sense “foolishness to the natural man.” (1 Cor. ii. 14.) The inward feelings of conviction, repentance, faith, hope, fear, and love, which He always produces, are precisely that part of religion which the world cannot understand.

The Holy Ghost is said to “dwell in” believers, and to be known of them. They know the feelings that He creates, and the fruits that He produces, though they may not be able to explain them, or see at first whence they come. But they all are what they are,—new men, new creatures, light and salt in the earth, compared to the worldly, by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost

The Holy Ghost is given to the Church of the elect, “to abide with them” until Christ comes the second time. He is intended to supply all the need of believers, and to fill up all that is wanting while Christ’s visible presence is removed. He is sent to abide with and help them until Christ returns.

These are truths of vast importance. Let us take care that we grasp them firmly, and never let them go. Next to the whole truth about Christ, it concerns our safety and peace to understand the whole truth about the Holy Ghost. Any doctrine about the Church, the ministry, or the

Sacraments, which obscures the Spirit's inward work, or turns it into mere form, is to be avoided as deadly error. Let us never rest till we *feel* and *know* that He dwells in us. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (Rom. viii. 9.)

LXI.

CHRIST'S SECOND ADVENT.

JOHN XIV. 18–20.

*“I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.*

*“Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me; because I live, ye shall live also.*

*“At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in Me, and I in you.”*

THE short passage before us is singularly rich in “precious promises.” Twice our Lord Jesus Christ says, “I will.” Twice He says to believers, “Ye shall.”

We learn from this passage that *Christ's second coming is meant to be the special comfort of believers.* He says to His disciples, “I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.”

Now what is the “coming” here spoken of?

The true sense of the expression appears to be the second personal coming of Christ at the end of the world. It is a wide, broad, sweeping promise, intended for all believers, in every age, and not for the Apostles alone: “I will not stay always in heaven; I will one day come back to you.” It is like the message which the angels brought to the disciples after the ascension: “This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go.” (Acts i. 11.) It is like the last promise which winds up the Book of

Revelation: “Surely I come quickly.” (Rev. xxii. 20.) Just in the same way the parting consolation held out to believers, the night before the crucifixion, is a personal return: “I will come to you.”

Let us settle it in our minds that all believers are comparatively “orphans,” and children in their minority, until the second advent. Our best things are yet to come. Faith has yet to be exchanged for sight, and hope for certainty. Our peace and joy are at present very imperfect: they are as nothing to what we shall have when Christ returns. For that return let us look, and long, and pray. Let us place it in the fore-front of all our doctrinal system, next to the atoning death and the interceding life of our Lord. The highest style of Christians are the men who look for and love the Lord’s appearing. (2 Tim. iv. 8.)

We learn, for another thing, that *Christ’s life secures the life of His believing people*. He says, “Because I live, ye shall live also.”

There is a mysterious and indissoluble union between Christ and every true Christian. The man that is once joined to Him by faith, is as closely united as a member of the body is united to the head. So long as Christ, his Head, lives, so long he will live: he cannot die unless Christ can be plucked from heaven, and Christ’s life destroyed; but this, since Christ is very God, is totally impossible! “Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more: death hath no more dominion over Him.” (Rom. vi.

9.) That which is Divine, in the very nature of things, cannot die.

Christ's life secures the continuance of *spiritual life* to His people. They shall not fall away: they shall persevere unto the end. The Divine nature, of which they are partakers, shall not perish: the incorruptible seed within them shall not be destroyed by the devil and the world. Weak as they are in themselves, they are closely knit to an immortal Head, and not one member of His mystical body shall ever perish.

Christ's life secures the *resurrection life* of His people. Just as He rose again from the grave, because death could not hold Him one moment beyond the appointed time, so shall all His believing members rise again, in the day when He calls them from the tomb. The victory that Jesus won when He rolled the stone away and came forth from the tomb, was a victory not only for Himself, but for His people. If the Head rose, much more shall the members.

Truths like these ought to be often pondered by true Christians. The careless world knows little of a believer's privileges. It sees little but the outside of him. It does not understand the secret of his present strength, and of his strong hope of good things to come. And what is that secret? Invisible union with an invisible Saviour in heaven! Each child of God is invisibly linked to the throne of the Rock of Ages. When that throne can be shaken, and not

till then, we may despair. But Christ lives, and we shall live also.

We learn, finally, from this passage, that *full and perfect knowledge of Divine things will never be attained by believers until the second advent*. Our Lord says, “At that day,” the day of my coming, “ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in Me, and I in you.”

The best of saints knows but little so long as he is in the body. The fall of our father Adam has corrupted our understandings, as well as our consciences, hearts, and wills. Even after conversion we “see through a glass darkly;” and on no point do we see so dimly as on the nature of our own union with Christ, and of the union of Christ and the Father. These are matters in which we must be content to believe humbly, and, like little children, to receive on trust the things which we cannot explain.

But it is a blessed and cheering thought that, when Christ comes again, the remains of ignorance shall be rolled away. Raised from the dead, freed from the darkness of this world, no longer tempted by the devil and tried by the flesh, believers shall see as they have been seen, and know as they have been known. We shall have light enough one day. What we know not now, we shall know hereafter.

LXII.

CHRIST'S LEGACY.

JOHN XIV. 27-31.

*“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.*

*“Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.*

*“And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.*

*“Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me.*

*“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 have here *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 inheritance 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 sealed and 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 man 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.” (Ephes, iii. 20; Psalm lxxxi. 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 by faith 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.

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.)