

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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LXXVI.

THE BETRAYAL OF CHRIST.

JOHN XVIII. 1-9.

*“When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which He entered, and His disciples.*

*“And Judas also, which betrayed Him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with His disciples.*

*“Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.*

*“Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon Him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?*

*“They answered Him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am He. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, stood with them.*

*“As soon then as He had said unto them, I am He, they went backward, and fell to the ground.*

*“Then asked He them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth.*

*“Jesus answered, I have told you that I am He: if therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way:*

*“That the saying might be fulfilled, which He spake, Of them which Thou gavest Me have I lost none.”*

WE should notice in these verses *the exceeding hardness of heart to which a backsliding professor may attain*. We are told that Judas, one of the twelve Apostles, became “guide to them that took Jesus.” (Acts i 16.) We are told that he used his knowledge of the place of our Lord’s retirement, in order to bring His deadly enemies upon Him; and we are told that when the band of men and officers approached his Master, in order to make Him prisoner, Judas “stood with them.”—Yet this was a man who for three years had been a constant companion of Christ, had seen His miracles, had heard His sermons, had enjoyed the benefit of His private instruction, had professed himself a believer, had even worked and preached in Christ’s name!—“Lord,” we may well say, “what is man?” From the highest degree of privilege down to the lowest depth of sin, there is but a succession of steps. Privileges misused seem to paralyze the conscience. The same fire that melts wax will harden clay.

Let us beware of resting our hopes of salvation on religious knowledge, however great, or religious advantages, however many. We may know all doctrinal truth, and be able to teach others, and yet prove rotten at heart, and go down to the pit with Judas. We may bask in the full sunshine of spiritual privileges, and bear the best of Christian teaching, and yet bear no fruit to God’s glory, and be found withered branches of the vine, only fit to be burned. “Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.” (1 Cor. x. 12.) Above all, let us beware of

cherishing within our hearts any secret besetting sin, such as love of money or love of the world. One faulty link in a chain-cable may cause a shipwreck. One little leak may sink a ship. One allowed and unmortified sin may ruin a professing Christian. Let him that is tempted to be a careless man in his religious life, consider these things, and take care. Let him remember Judas Iscariot. His history is meant to be a lesson.

LXXVII.

CHRIST'S SUBMISSION TO HIS FATHER'S  
WILL.

JOHN XVIII. 10–11.

*“Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant’s name was Malchus.*

*“Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?”*

WE should notice, in these verses, *our Lord’s perfect submission to His Father’s will*. Once, in another place, we find Him saying, “If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.” Again, in another place, we find Him saying, “If this cup may not pass away from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done.” Here, however, we find even a higher pitch of cheerful acquiescence: “The cup that my Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?” (Matt xxvi. 39–42.)

Let us see in this blessed frame of mind a pattern for all who profess and call themselves Christians. Far as we may come short of the Master’s standard, let this be the mark at which we continually aim. Determination to have our own way, and do only what we like, is one great

source of unhappiness in the world. The habit of laying all our matters before God in prayer, and asking Him to choose our portion, is one chief secret of peace. He is the truly wise man who has learned to say at every stage of his journey, "Give me what Thou wilt, place me where Thou wilt, do with me as Thou wilt; but not my will, but Thine be done." This is the man who has the mind of Christ. By self-will Adam and Eve fell, and brought sin and misery into the world. Entire submission of will to the will of God is the best preparation for that heaven where God will be all.

Let us carefully remember that our blessed Lord suffered and died of His own free will. He did not die because He could not help it; He did not suffer because He could not escape. All the soldiers of Pilate's army could not have taken Him, if He had not been willing to be taken. They could not have hurt a hair of His head, if He had not given them permission. But here, as in all His earthly ministry, Jesus was a willing sufferer. He had set His heart on accomplishing our redemption. He loved us, and gave Himself for us, cheerfully, willingly, gladly, in order to make atonement for our sins. It was "the joy set before Him" which made Him endure the cross, and despise the shame, and yield Himself up without reluctance into the hands of His enemies. (Heb. xii. 2.) Let this thought abide in our hearts, and refresh our souls. We have a Saviour who was far more willing to save us than we are willing to be saved. If we are not saved, the fault is all our own. Christ is just

as willing to receive and pardon, as He was willing to be taken prisoner, to bleed, and to die.

LXXVIII.

CHRIST BEFORE CAIAPHAS.

JOHN XVIII. 12–24.

*“Then the land and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound Him,*

*“And led Him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year,*

*“Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.*

*“And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest..*

*“But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.*

*“Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man’s disciples? He saith, I am not.*

*“And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.*



*“The high priest then asked Jesus of His disciples, and of His doctrine.*

*“Jesus answered him: I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.*

*“Why askest thou Me? ask them which heard Me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.*

*“And when He had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest Thou the high priest so?*

*“Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou Me?*

*“Now Annas had sent Him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.”*

WE should mark, in this passage, *the amazing condescension of our Lord Jesus Christ*. We see the Son of God taken prisoner and led away bound like a malefactor,—arraigned before wicked and unjust judges,—insulted and treated with contempt And yet this unresisting prisoner had only to will His deliverance, and He would at once have been free! He had only to command the confusion of His enemies, and they would at once have been confounded. Above all, He was One who knew full well that Annas and Caiaphas, and all their companions, would one day stand before His judgment seat, and receive an eternal sentence. He knew all these things, and yet condescended to be treated as a malefactor without resisting!

One thing, at any rate, is very clear. The love of Christ to sinners is “a love that passeth knowledge.” To suffer for those whom we love, and who are in some sense worthy of our affections, is suffering that we can understand. To submit to ill-treatment quietly, when we have no power to resist, is submission that is both graceful and wise. But to suffer voluntarily, when we have the power to prevent it, and to suffer for a world of unbelieving and ungodly sinners, unasked and unthanked,—this is a line of conduct which passes man’s understanding. Never let us forget that this is the peculiar beauty of Christ’s sufferings, when we read the wondrous story of His cross and passion. He was led away captive, and dragged before the High Priest’s bar, not because He could not help Himself, but because He had set His whole heart on saving sinners,—by bearing their sins, by being treated as a sinner, and by being punished in their stead. He was a willing prisoner, that we might be set free. He was willingly arraigned and condemned, that we might be absolved and declared innocent.—“He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us unto God.”— “Though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.”— “He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” (1 Peter iii. 18; 2 Cor. viii. 9; v. 21.) Surely if there is any doctrine of the Gospel which needs to be clearly known, it is the doctrine of Christ’s voluntary substitution. He suffered and died willingly, and

unresistingly, because He knew that He had come to be our substitute, and by substitution to purchase our salvation.

LXXIX.

PETER'S DENIAL.

JOHN XVIII. 25–27.

*“And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of His disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not.*

*“One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?*

*“Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.”*

WE should notice here the *amazing degree of weakness that may be found in a real Christian*. We see this exemplified in a most striking manner, in the conduct of the Apostle Peter. We see that famous disciple forsaking his Master, and acting like a coward,—running away when he ought to have stood by His side,—ashamed to own Him when he ought to have confessed Him,—and finally denying three times that he knew Him. And this takes place immediately after receiving the Lord's Supper—after hearing the most touching address and prayer that mortal ear ever heard—after the plainest possible warnings—under the pressure of no very serious temptation. “Lord,” we may well say, “what is man that Thou art mindful of

him?" "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." (Psalm viii. 4; 1 Cor. x. 12.)

This fall of Peter is doubtless intended to be a lesson to the whole Church of Christ. It is recorded for our learning, that we may be kept from like sorrowful overthrow. It is a beacon mercifully set up in Scripture, to prevent others making shipwreck. It shows us the danger of pride and self-confidence. If Peter had not been so sure that although all denied Christ, he never would, he would probably never have fallen.—It shows us the danger of laziness. If Peter had watched and prayed, when our Lord advised him to do so, he would have found grace to help him in the time of need.—It shows us, not least, the painful influence of the fear of man. Few are aware, perhaps, how much more they fear the face of man whom they can see, than the eye of God whom they cannot see. These things are written for our admonition. Let us remember Peter and be wise.

After all, let us leave the passage with the comfortable reflection that we have a merciful and pitiful High Priest, who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and will not break the bruised reed. Peter, no doubt, fell shamefully, and only rose again after heartfelt repentance and bitter tears. But he *did* rise again. He was not left to reap the consequence of his sin, and cast off for evermore. The same pitiful hand that saved him from drowning, when his faith failed him on the waters, was once more stretched out to raise him when he fell in the High Priest's

hall. Can we doubt that he rose a wiser and better man? If Peter's fall has made Christians see more clearly their own great weakness and Christ's great compassion, then Peter's fall has not been recorded in vain.

LXXX.

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST'S MISSION.

JOHN XVIII. 33–37.

*“Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto Him, Art Thou the King of the Jews?”*

*“Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?”*

*“Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me: what hast Thou done?”*

*“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence.”*

*“Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art Thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth, Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice,”*

NOTICE, in these verses, the account *that our Lord Jesus Christ gives of His kingdom*, He says, “My kingdom is not of this world.” These famous words have been so often perverted and wrested out of their real meaning that their

true sense has been almost buried under a heap of false interpretations. Let us make sure that we know what they mean.

Our Lord's main object in saying "My kingdom is not of this world" was to inform Pilate's mind concerning the true nature of His kingdom, and to correct any false impressions he might have received from the Jews. He tells him that He did not come to set up a kingdom which would interfere with the Roman Government. He did not aim at establishing a temporal power, to be supported by armies and maintained by taxes. The only dominion He exercised was over men's hearts, and the only weapons that His subjects employed were spiritual weapons. A kingdom which required neither money nor servants for its support, was one which the Roman Emperors need not be afraid of. In the highest sense it was a kingdom "not of this world."

But our Lord did not intend to teach that the kings of this world have nothing to do with religion, and ought to ignore God altogether in the government of their subjects. No such idea, we may be sure, was in His mind. He knew perfectly well that it was written, "By Me kings reign" (Prov. viii. 15), and that kings are as much required to use their influence for God, as the meanest of their subjects. He knew that the prosperity of kingdoms is wholly dependent on the blessing of God, and that kings are as much bound to encourage righteousness and godliness, as to punish unrighteousness and immorality. To suppose that



He meant to teach Pilate that, in His judgment, an infidel might be as good a king as a Christian, and a man like Gallio as good a ruler as David or Solomon, is simply absurd.

Let us carefully hold fast the true meaning of our Lord's words in these latter days. Let us never be ashamed to maintain that no Government can expect to prosper which refuses to recognise religion, which deals with its subjects as if they had no souls, and cares not whether they serve God, or Baal, or no God at all. Such a Government will find, sooner or later, that its line of policy is suicidal, and damaging to its best interests. No doubt the kings of this world cannot make men Christians by laws and statutes. But they can encourage and support Christianity, and they will do so if they are wise. The kingdom where there is the most industry, temperance, truthfulness, and honesty, will always be the most prosperous of kingdoms. The king who wants to see these things abound among his subjects should do all that lies in his power to help Christianity and to discourage irreligion.

Notice, again, in these verses, *the account that our Lord gives of His own mission*. He says, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."

Of course we are not to suppose our Lord meant that this was the *only* end of His mission. No doubt He spoke with special reference to what He knew was passing through Pilate's mind. He did not come to win a kingdom

with the sword, and to gather adherents and followers by force. He came armed with no other weapon but “truth.” To testify to fallen man the truth about God, about sin, about the need of a Redeemer, about the nature of holiness,—to declare and lift up before man’s eyes this long-lost and buried “truth,”—was one great purpose of His ministry. He came to be God’s witness to a lost and corrupt world. That the world needed such a testimony, He does not shrink from telling the proud Roman Governor. And this is what St. Paul had in view, when he tells Timothy that “before Pontius Pilate Christ witnessed a good confession.” (1 Tim. vi. 13.)

The servants of Christ in every age must remember that our Lord’s conduct in this place is meant to be their example. Like Him we are to be witnesses to God’s truth, salt in the midst of corruption, light in the midst of darkness, men and women not afraid to stand alone, and to testify for God against the ways of sin and the world. To do so may entail on us much trouble, and even persecution. But the duty is clear and plain. If we love life, if we would keep a good conscience, and be owned by Christ at the last day, we must be “witnesses.” It is written, “Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” (Mark viii. 38.)