

F. B. MEYER



**LOVE
TO THE UTTERMOST**

F. B. Meyer

Love to the Uttermost

Expositions of John XIII.-XXI

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

LOVE TO THE UTMOST

II

III

IV

V

VI

VII

VIII

IX

X

XI

XII

XIII

XIV

XV

XVI

XVII

XVIII

XIX

XX

XXI

XXII

XXIII

XXIV

XXV

XXVI

XXVII

XXVIII

XXIX

XXX

XXXI

XXXII

XXXIII

XXXIV

XXXV

XXXVI

XXXVII

PREFACE

[Table of Contents](#)

The former book on the first twelve chapters of this sublime Gospel was called, *The Life and Light of Men*. The title was naturally suggested by the subject-matter of those chapters. We had little difficulty in finding a title for the present book, which covers, however cursorily, the remainder of the Gospel. It lay open before us in the opening verses of the thirteenth chapter, as translated in the margin of the Revised Version. "Having loved His own which were in the world, *He loved them to the uttermost.*"

It has been impossible, in the limited space at my disposal, to deal with these chapters as I would. Indeed, to do so, it would be necessary to know the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of the Love of God, which passeth knowledge. Time has been allowed to elapse, in the hope that the view would be clearer, and the expression more adequate, of the deep things to which the Lord gave expression. But it is useless to wait till one is satisfied of the adequacy of one's work, else life will have run its course before a beginning has been made. At the end of ten more years, the task would seem still more impracticable.

In the closing chapters I have woven together the narratives of the four evangelists, so as to give a succinct and connected account of the last hours of our Lord's life, and especially of His death. It has been a great delight thus

to tread the *Via Crucis*, which is also the *Via Lucis*—the Way of the Cross, which is the Way of Life, and Light, and Love.

F. B. MEYER.

**I THE LAVER IN THE LIFE OF JESUS II THRICE
BIDDEN TO LOVE III HEAVEN DELAYED, BUT
GUARANTEED IV "MANY MANSIONS" V THE
REALITY OF WHICH JACOB'S DREAM WAS THE
SHADOW VI CHRIST REVEALING THE FATHER VII
THE GREAT DEEDS OF FAITH VIII HOW TO
SECURE MORE AND BETTER PRAYER IX THE
OTHER PARACLETE X THE THREE
DISPENSATIONS XI THREE PARADOXES XII
MANY MANSIONS FOR GOD XIII CHRIST'S
LEGACY AND GIFT OF PEACE XIV THE STORY OF
THE VINE XV "ABIDE IN ME, AND I IN YOU" XVI
PRAYER THAT PREVAILS XVII THE HATRED OF
THE WORLD XVIII THE WORK OF THE HOLY
SPIRIT ON THE WORLD XIX CHRIST'S RETICENCE
SUPPLEMENTED BY THE SPIRIT'S ADVENT XX
THE CONQUEROR OF THE WORLD XXI
CONSECRATED TO CONSECRATE XXII THE
LORD'S PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE'S ONENESS
XXIII THE LOVE THAT BOUND CHRIST TO THE
CROSS XXIV DRINKING THE CUP XXV THE HALL
OF ANNAS XXVI HOW IT FARED WITH PETER
XXVII THE TRIAL BEFORE CAIAPHAS XXVIII
"JUDAS, WHICH BETRAYED HIM" XXIX THE FIRST
TRIAL BEFORE PILATE XXX THE SECOND TRIAL**

**BEFORE PILATE XXXI THE SEVEN SAYINGS OF
THE CROSS XXXII CHRIST'S BURIAL XXXIII THE
DAY OF RESURRECTION XXXIV THE LAKE OF
GALILEE XXXV PETER'S LOVE AND WORK XXXVI
THE LIFE-PLAN OF PETER AND JOHN XXXVII
BACK TO THE FATHER**

LOVE TO THE UTMOST

[Table of Contents](#)

Expositions of John xiii.-xxi.

I

The Laver in the Life of Jesus

"He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with a towel wherewith He was girded."—JOHN xiii. 5.

In the court of the Temple there were two objects that arrested the eye of the entering worshipper—the Brazen Altar, and the Laver. The latter was kept always full of pure, fresh water, for the constant washings enjoined by the Levitical code. Before the priests were consecrated for their holy work, and attired in the robes of the sacred office, they washed there (Ex. xxix. 4). Before they entered the Holy Place in their ordinary ministry, and before Aaron, on the

great Day of Atonement, proceeded to the Most Holy Place, with blood, not his own, it was needful to conform to the prescribed ablutions. "He shall bathe his flesh in water" (Lev. xvi. 4).

First, then, the Altar, and then the Laver; the order is irreversible, and the teaching of the types is as exact as mathematics. Hence, when the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews invites us to draw near, and make our abode in the Most Holy Place, he carefully obeys the Divine order, and bids us "draw near, with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."

In this scene (John xiii. 1-14), on the eve of our Lord's betrayal, we find the spiritual counterpart of the Laver, just as the Cross stands for the Brazen Altar.

I. THE CIRCUMSTANCE THAT LED TO THIS ACT OF LOVE.— In order fully to understand this touching incident, it is necessary to remember the circumstances out of which it sprang. On the way from Bethany to the upper room in which the Supper had been prepared, and on entering therein, our Lord must have been deeply absorbed in the momentous events in which He was to be the central figure; but He was not unmindful of a contention which had engaged His disciples, for they had been disputing one with another as to which of them should be the greatest. The proud spirit of the flesh, which so often cursed the little group, broke out in this awful hour with renewed energy, as though the prince of this world would inflict a parting blow on his great Antagonist, through those whom He loved best.

It was as if he said, "See the results of Thy tears and teachings, of Thy prayers and pleadings; the love which Thou hast so often inculcated is but a passing sentiment, that has never rooted itself in the soil of these wayward hearts. It is a plant too rare and exotic for the climate of earth. Take it back with Thee to Thine own home if Thou wilt, but seek not to achieve the impossible." It was heartrending that this exhibition of pride should take place just at this juncture. These were the men who had been with Him in His temptations, who had had the benefit of His most careful instructions, who had been exposed to the full influence of His personal character; and yet, notwithstanding all, the rock-bed of pride, that cast the angels down from heaven, that led to the fall of man, obtruded itself. This occasion in which it manifested itself was very inopportune; already the look of Calvary was on the Saviour's face, and the sword entering His heart. Surely, they must have been aware that the shadow of the great eclipse was already passing over the face of their Sun. But even this did not avail to restrain the manifestation of their pride. Heedless of three years of example and teaching; unrestrained by the symptoms of our Lord's sorrow; unchecked by the memory of happy and familiar intercourse, which should have bound them forever in a united brotherhood, they wrangled with high voices and hot faces, with the flashing eye and clenched fist of the Oriental, as to who should be first.

And if pride thus asserted itself after *such* education, and under *such* circumstances, let us be sure that it is not far away from any one of us. We do not now contend, in so many words, for the chief places; courtesy, politeness, fear

of losing the respect of our fellows, restrain us. But our resentment to the fancied slight, or the assumption by another of work which we thought our own; our sense of hurtness when we are put aside; our jealousy and envy; our detracting speeches, and subtle insinuations of low motive, all show how much of this loveless spirit rankles in our hearts. We have been planted in the soil of this world, and we betray its flavor; we have come of a proud stock, we betray our heredity.

II. LOVE'S SENSITIVENESS TO SIN ON THE PART OF ITS BELOVED.—Consider these epithets of the love of Christ:

It was unusually tender.—When the hour of departure approaches, though slight reference be made to it, love lives with the sound of the departing wheels, or the scream of the engine, always in its ear; and there are given a tenderness to the tone, a delicacy to the touch, a thoughtfulness for the heartache of those from which it is to be parted, which are of inexpressible beauty. All that was present with Christ. He was taking that Supper with them before He suffered. He knew that He would soon depart out of this world unto the Father; His ear was specially on the alert; His nature keenly alive; His heart thrilling with unusual tenderness, as the sands slowly ran out from the hour-glass.

It was supreme love.—"Having loved His own that were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Those last words have been thought to refer to the end of life, but it surely were superfluous to tell us that the strong waters of death could not quench the love of the Son of Man. When once He loves, He loves always. It is needless to tell us that the

Divine heart which has enshrined a soul will not forsake it; that the name of the beloved is never erased from the palms of the hands, that the covenant is not forgotten though eternity elapse. Of course Christ loves to the end, even though that end reaches to endlessness. We do not need to be assured that the Immortal Lover, who has once taken us up to union with Himself, can never loose His hold. Therefore it is better to adopt the alternative suggested by the margin of the Revised Version, "He loved them to the uttermost." There was nothing to be desired. Nothing was needed to fill out the ideal of perfect love. Not a stitch was required for the needle-work of wrought gold; not a touch demanded for the perfectly achieved picture; not a throb additional to the strong pulse of affection with which He regarded His own.

It is very wonderful that He should have loved such men like this. As we pass them under review at this time of their life, they seem a collection of nobodies, with the exception perhaps of John and Peter. But they were His own, there was a special relationship between Him and them. They had belonged to the Father, and He had given them to the Son as His special perquisite and belonging. "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." May we dare, in this meaning, to apply to Christ that sense of proprietorship, which makes a bit of moorland waste, a few yards of garden-ground, dear to the freeholder?

"Breathes there the man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own . . .?"

It was because these men were Christ's own, that the full passion of His heart set in toward them, and He loved them to the utmost bound; that is, the tides filled the capacity of the ocean-bed of possibility.

It was bathed in the sense of His Divine origin and mission.—The curtain was waxing very thin. It was a moment of vision. There had swept across His soul a realization of the full meaning of His approaching triumph. He looked back, and was hardly conscious of the manger where the horned oxen fed, the lowly birth, the obscure years, in the sublime conception that He had come forth from God. He looked forward, and was hardly conscious of the cross, the nail, the thorn-crown, and the spear, because of the sublime consciousness that He was stepping back, to go to Him with whom He realized His identity. He looked on through the coming weeks, and knew that the Father had given all things into His hands. What the devil had offered as the price of obeisance to himself, that the Father was about to give Him, nay, had already given Him, as the price of His self-emptying. And if for a moment He stooped, as we shall see He did, to the form of a servant, it was not because of any failure to recognize His high dignity and mission, but with the sense of Godhead quick on His soul.

The love which went out toward this little group of men had Deity in it. It was the love of the Throne, of the glory He had with the Father before the worlds were, of that which now fills the bosom of His ascended and glorified nature.

He was aware of the task to which He was abandoning these men.—He knew that as He was the High Priest over the house of God, they were its priests. He knew that

cleansing was necessary before they could receive the anointing of the Holy Ghost. He knew that the great work of carrying forward His Gospel was to be delegated to their hands. He knew that they were to carry the sacred vessels of the Gospel, which must not be blurred or fouled by contact with human pride or uncleanness. He knew that the very mysteries of Gethsemane and Calvary would be inexplicable, and that none might stand on that holy hill, save those that had clean hands and a pure heart; and because of all this, He turned to them, by symbol and metaphor, to impress upon their heart and memory the necessity of participating in the cleansing of which the Laver is the type.

The highest love is ever quickest to detect the failures and inconsistencies of the beloved. Just because of its intensity, it can be content with nothing less than the best, because the best means the blessedest; and it longs that the object of its thought should be most blessed forever. It is a mistake to think that green-eyed jealousy is quickest to detect the spots on the sun, the freckles on the face, and the marring discords in the music of the life; love is quicker, more microscopic, more exacting that the ideal should be achieved. Envy is content to indicate the fault, and leave it; but love detects, and waits and holds its peace until the fitting opportunity arrives, and then sets itself to remove, with its own tenderest ministry, the defect which had spoiled the completeness and beauty of its object.

Perhaps there had never been a moment in the human consciousness of our Lord, when, side by side with this intense love for His own, there had been so vivid a sense of

oneness with His Father, of His unity with the source of Infinite Purity and Blessedness. We might have supposed that this would have alienated Him from His poor friends, but in this our thoughts are not as His. Just because of His awful holiness, He was quick to perceive the unholiness of His friends, and could not endure it, and essayed to rid them of it. Just because of His Divine goodness He could detect the possibilities of goodness in them, and be patient enough to give it culturing care.

The most perfect musician may be most tortured by incompetence; but he will be most likely to detect true merit, and give time to its training. "The powerfulest magnet will pick out, in the powdered dust of the ironstone, fine particles of metal that a second or third-rate magnet would fail to draw to itself." Do not dread the awful holiness of Jesus; it is your hope. He will never be content till He has made you like Himself; and side by side with His holiness, never fail to remember His gentle, tender love.

III. THE DIVINE HUMILITY, THAT COPES WITH HUMAN SIN. —"He riseth from supper, and layeth aside His garments; and He took a towel and girded Himself." This is what the apostle calls taking upon Himself the form of a servant. The charm of the scene is its absolute simplicity. You cannot imagine Christ posturing to the ages. There was no aiming at effect, no thought of the beauty or humility of the act, as there is when the Pope yearly washes the feet of twelve beggars, from a golden basin, wiping them with a towel of rarest fabric! Christ did not act thus for show or pretence,

but with an absolutely single purpose of fulfilling a needed office. And in this He set forth the spirit of our redemption.

This is the key to the Incarnation.—With slight alteration the words will read truly of that supreme act. He rose from the throne, laid aside the garments of light which He had worn as His vesture, took up the poor towel of humanity, and wrapped it about His glorious Person; poured His own blood into the basin of the Cross, and set Himself to wash away the foul stains of human depravity and guilt.

As pride was the source of human sin, Christ must needs provide an antidote in His absolute humility—a humility which could not grow beneath these skies, but must be brought from the world where the lowliest are the greatest, and the most childlike reign as kings.

This is the key to every act of daily cleansing.—We have been washed. Once, definitely, and irrevocably, we have been bathed in the crimson tide that flows from Calvary. But we need a daily cleansing. Our feet become soiled with the dust of life's highways; our hands grimy, as our linen beneath the rain of filth in a great city; our lips are fouled, as the white doorstep of the house, by the incessant throng of idle, unseemly and fretful words; our hearts cannot keep unsoiled the stainless robes with which we pass from the closet at morning prime. Constantly we need to repair to the Laver to be washed. But do we always realize how much each act of confession, on our part, involves from Christ, on His? Whatever important work He may at that moment have on hand; whatever directions He may be giving to the loftiest angels for the fulfillment of His purposes; however pressing the concerns of the Church or the universe upon

His broad shoulders, He must needs turn from all these to do a work He will not delegate. Again He stoops from the throne, and girds Himself with a towel, and, in all lowliness, endeavors to remove from thee and me the strain which His love dare not pass over. He never loses the print of the nail; He never forgets Calvary and the blood; He never spends one hour without stooping to do the most menial work of cleansing filthy souls. And it is because of this humility He sits on the Throne and wields the sceptre over hearts and worlds.

This is the key to our ministry to each other.—I have often thought that we do not often enough wash one another's feet. We are conscious of the imperfections which mar the characters of those around us. We are content to note, criticise, and learn them. We dare not attempt to remove them. This failure arises partly because we do not love with a love like Christ's—a love which will brave resentment, annoyance, rebuke, in its quest,—and partly because we are not willing to stoop low enough.

None can remove the mote of another, so long as the beam is left in the eye, and the sin unjudged in the life, None can cleanse the stain, who is not willing to take the form of a servant, and go down with bare knees upon the floor. None is able to restore those that are overtaken in a fault, who do not count themselves the chief of sinners and the least of saints.

We need more of this lowly, loving spirit: not so sensitive to wrong and evil as they affect us, as anxious for the stain they leave on the offender. It is of comparatively small consequence how much we suffer; it is of much importance

that none of Christ's disciples should be allowed to go on for a moment longer, with unconfessed and unjudged wrongs clouding their peace, and hindering the testimony which they might give. Let us therefore watch for each other's souls: let us consider one another to provoke to love and good works; let us in all sincerity do as Christ has done, washing each other's feet in all humility and tender love. But this spirit is impossible save through fellowship with the Lamb of God, and the reception of His holy, humble nature into the inmost heart, by the Holy Ghost.



[Table of Contents](#)

Thrice Bidden to Love

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."—JOHN xiii. 34.

Anacreon complains that when they asked him to sing of heroic deeds, he could only sing of love. But the love with which he fills his sonnets will bear as much comparison with that of which Jesus spoke in His last discourse, as the flaring oil of a country fair with the burning of the heavenly constellations. Even the love that binds young hearts is too selfish and exclusive to set forth that pure ray which shone

from the heart of the Son of Man, and shines and will shine. What word shall we use to describe it?

Charity?—The disposition denoted by this great word does not fulfill the measure of the love of Christ. It is cold and severe. It can be organized. It casts its dole to the beggar and turns away, content to have relieved the sentiment of pity. By being employed for one manifestation of love, charity is too limited and restricted in its significance to become an adequate expression of the Divine love which Drought Jesus from the throne, and should inspire us to lay down our lives for the brethren.

Philanthropy?—This is a great word, "the love of man." And yet the philanthropist is too often content with the general patronage of good works, the elaboration of schemes, the management of committees, to do much personal work for the amelioration of the world. The word is altogether too distant, too deficient in the personal element, too extensive in its significance. It will not serve to represent the Divine compassion with which the heart of Christ was, at the moment of speaking, in tumult.

Complacency?—No; for this is the emotion excited by the contemplation of merit and virtue, which turns away from sin and deformity; and the sentiment denoted by our Master's words is one that is not brought into existence by virtue, nor extinguished by demerit and vice.

Since all these words fail, we are driven to speak of love, as Christ used the word, as being the essence of the Divine nature, for God is love. It is the indwelling of God in the soul. It is the transmitting through our lives of that which we have received in fellowship with the uncreated glory of the Divine

Being. That which was in the beginning between the Father and the Son; that which constrained our Emmanuel to sojourn in this world of sin; that which inspired His sacrifice; that which dwells perennially in His heart, vanquishing time and distance; which overflows all expressions, and defies definition—is the love of which these words speak, and which we are commanded to entertain toward each other.

It is a commandment: "These things I command you." "This is His commandment: that we should believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another even as He gave us commandment." Obviously, then, obedience must be possible. Christ had gauged our nature not only as Creator, but by personal experience. He knew what was in man. The possibilities of our nature were well within His cognizance; therefore it must be possible for us to love one another qualitatively, if not quantitatively, as He has loved us. Do not sit down before this great command and say it is impossible; that were to throw discredit on Him who spake it. Dare to believe that no word of His is vain. He describes eminences of attainment which it is possible for us all to reach: let us surrender ourselves to Him, that He should fulfill in us His ideal, and make us experts in the science of love.

It is a new commandment.—Archbishop Ussher on a memorable occasion called it the eleventh. It is recorded that having heard of the simplicity and beauty of the ordering of Rutherford's home, he resolved to visit it for himself. One Saturday night he arrived alone at the Manse, and asked for entertainment over the next day. A simple but hearty welcome was accorded him; and after partaking of

the frugal fare, he was invited to join the household in religious exercises which ushered in the Lord's day.

"How many commandments are there?" the master asked his guest, wholly unaware who he was.

"Eleven," was the astonishing reply; at which the very servants were scandalized, regarding the newcomer as a prodigy of ignorance. But the man of God perceived the rare light of character and insight which gleamed beneath the answer, and asked for a private interview. This issued in the invitation to preach on the following day. To the amazement of the household, so scandalized on the previous night, the stranger appeared in the master's pulpit, and announced the words on which we are meditating as his text, adding, "This may be described as the eleventh commandment."

Obedience to this fulfills the rest.—Love is the fulfilling of the law. Do we need to be told to have no other gods but God, to forbear taking His name in vain, and to devote one day in seven to the cultivation of a closer relationship with Him, if we love Him with all our soul and mind and strength? Do we need to be warned against killing our neighbor, stealing his goods, or bearing false witness against his character, if we love him as ourselves? Only let a man be filled with this divine disposition which is the unique characteristic of God; let him be filled with the spirit of love; let him be perfected in love, and, almost unconsciously, he will not only be kept from infringing the prohibitions of the law of Sinai, but will be inspired to fulfill the requirements of the Mount of Beatitudes. Love, and do as you like. You will like to do only what God would like you to do.

There is a very important purpose to be realized in obeying this command.—"By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." Every Church claims to be the true representative of Christ. The Eastern, because it occupies the lands where Christianity was cradled. The Roman Catholic, because it professes to be able to trace its orders to the apostles. But, amid the hubbub of rival claims, the world, unconvinced, still awaits the emergence of the true Bride of the Lamb. The one note of the true Church is Love. When once men of different nationalities and countries behold its manifestation, they do not hesitate to acknowledge the presence of God, and to admit that those who are animated by perfect love to Him and to one another constitute a unique organization, which cannot have originated in the will or intellect of man, but, like the New Jerusalem, must have come out of heaven from God. So sublime, so transcendent, so unearthly is love, that its presence is significant of the handiwork of God, as the fire that burned in the bush indicated that the "I AM" was there.

Love is a supreme test, not only of the Church, but of the individual. It has been the mistake of every age to make faith rather than love the test of Christianity. "Tell me how much a man believes, and I shall know how good a Christian he is!" The whole endeavor of the mediaeval Church was to reduce the followers of Christ to a uniformity of belief. And in our own time, a man is permitted by consent to be grasping after money, imperious in temper, uncharitable in speech, without losing position in the Church, so long as he assents to all the clauses of an orthodox creed.

With Christ, however, love is all-important. A man may have faith enough to remove mountains, but if he have not love, he is nothing, and lighter than vanity in the estimation of heaven. Faith ranks with hope and love, but it is destined to pass as the blossoms of spring before the fruit of autumn, whilst love shall abide forevermore. A man may have a very inadequate creed; like the woman of old, he may think there is virtue in a garment, or a rite; like Thomas, he may find it impossible to attain to the exuberant confidence of his brethren; but if he loves Christ enough to be prepared to die for Him, if through the narrow aperture of a very limited faith, love enough has entered his soul from the source of love, Christ will entrust him with the tending of His sheep and lambs, and call him into the secret place. Of course, the more full-orbed and intelligent our faith, the quicker and intenser will be our love. But faith, after all, is but the hand that takes, whilst love is the fellowship of kindred hearts that flash each on the other the enkindling gleam.

If you do not love, though you count yourself illumined with the light of perfect knowledge, you are in the dark. "He that hateth his brother is in the darkness, even until now."

If you do not love, you are dead. "He that loveth not, abideth in death." The light sparkle of intellectual or emotional life may light up your words, and fascinate your immediate circle of friends, but there will be no life toward God. Love is the perfect tense of live. Whoso does not love does not live, in the deepest sense. There are capacities for richer existence that never unfold until love stands at the portal and sounds his challenge, and summons the sleeper to awake and arise.

If you do not love, you are under the thrall of the devil, into whose dark nature love never comes. "Herein the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil. Cain was of the wicked one, and slew his brother."

"As I have loved you." Life is one long education to know the love of God. "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us," is the reflection of an old man reviewing the past. Each stage of life, each phase of experience, is intended to give us a deeper insight into the love wherewith we are loved; and as each discovery breaks upon our glad vision, we are bidden to exemplify it to others. Does Jesus forgive to the seventy-seventh time? We must forgive in the same measure. Does Jesus forget as well as forgive? We, too, must forgive after the same fashion. Does Jesus seek after the erring, and endeavor to induce the temper of mind that will crave forgiveness? We also must seek the man who has transgressed against us, endeavoring to lead him to a better mind. The Christian knows no law or limit but that imposed by these significant words, spoken on the eve of Christ's sacrifice, "As I have loved you."

Thus all life gives opportunities for the practice of this celestial temper and disposition. It has been said that talent develops in solitude, whilst character is made in the strain of life. Be it so. Then the character of loving may be made stronger by every association we have with our fellows. Each contact with men, women, and children, may give us an opportunity of loving with a little more of the strength, purity, and sweetness of the love of Christ. The busiest life can find time for the cultivation of this spirit. That which is spent in a crowd will even have greater opportunities than

the one which is limited to solitude. The distractions and engagements that threaten to break our lives up to a number of inconsiderable fragments may thus conduce to a higher unity than could be gained by following one occupation, or concentrating ourselves on one object.

Let us gird up the loins of our minds, and resolve to seek a baptism of love from the Holy Ghost, that we may be perfected in love; that we may love God first, and all else in Him, ascending from our failures to a more complete conformity to the love wherewith He has loved us; embracing the sinful and erring in the compass of our compassion, as we embrace the Divine and Eternal in the compass of our adoration and devotion.



[Table of Contents](#)

Heaven Delayed, but Guaranteed

"Simon Peter said unto Him, Lord, whither goest Thou? Jesus answered him. Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterward."—JOHN xiii. 36.

These chapters are holy ground. The last words of our dearest, spoken in the seclusion of the death-chamber to the tear-stained group gathered around, are not for all the world, and are recorded only to those whose love makes them able to appreciate. And what are these words that now

begin to flow from the Master's lips, but His last to His own? They were held back so long as Judas was there. There was a repression caused by his presence which hindered the interchange of confidences; but, when he was gone, love hastened to her secret stores, and drew forth her choicest, rarest viands to share them, that they might be in after days a strength and solace.

This marvellous discourse, which begins in chapter xiii. 31, continues through chapters xiv., xv., xvi., and closes in the sublime prayer of chapter xvii. Better that all the literature of the world should have shared the fate of the Alexandrian library, than that these precious words should have been lost amid the fret of the ages.

The Lord commences His discourse by speaking of His speedy departure. "Little children," He said, using a term which indicated that He felt toward them a parental tenderness, and spoke as a dying father might have done to the helpless babes that gathered around his bed, "I am to be with you for a very little time longer; the sand has nearly run out in the hour-glass. I know you will seek Me; your love will make you yearn to be with Me where I am, to continue the blessed intimacy, the ties which within the last few weeks have been drawn so much closer; but it will not be possible. As I said to the Jews, so must I say to you, Whither I go, ye cannot come." He then proceeds to give them a new commandment of love, as though He said: "The *cannot* which prevents you following Me now is due to a lack of perfect love on your part, as well as for other reasons; it is necessary, therefore, that you wait to acquire it, ere you can be with Me where I am."

Simon Peter hardly hears Him uttering these last words; he is pondering too deeply what he has just heard, and calls the Master back to that announcement, as though He had passed it with too light a tread: "Going away! Lord, whither goest Thou?" To that question our Lord might have given a direct answer: "Heaven! The Father's bosom! The New Jerusalem! The City of God!" Any of these would have been sufficient; but instead He says in effect: "It is a matter of comparative indifference whither I go; I have no wish to feed curiosity with descriptions of things in the heavens, which you could not understand." The main point for you, in this brief life, is so to become assimilated to Me in humility, devotion, likeness, and character, that you may be able to be My companion and friend in those new paths on which I am entering, as you have been in those which I am now leaving. "Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterward."

The words staggered Peter; he could not understand what Christ meant; he could not see how much had to be done before he could share in Christ's coming glory. He made the same mistake as James and John had done before, and wanted the throne, without perceiving that it was conditioned on fellowship in the cup and the baptism into death. With deep emotion he persisted in his inquiries: "Why cannot I follow Thee now? There is no place on earth to which I would not go with Thee. Have I not already left all to follow Thee? Have I not been with Thee on the Transfiguration Mount, as well as in Thy journeyings? There is but one experience through which I have not passed with Thee, and that is death; but if that stands next in Thy life-

plan, I will lay down my life for Thy sake. Anything to be with Thee."

How little Peter knew himself! How much better did Christ know him. "What! dost thou profess thyself willing to die with Me? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt deny Me thrice, between now and cock-crow to-morrow morning." These words silenced Peter for all the evening afterward. He does not appear to have made another remark, but was absorbed in heart-breaking grief: though all the while there rang in his heart those blessed words of hope: "Whither I go, thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterward"—words which our Lord caught up and expanded for the comfort of them all, who now with Peter for the first time realized that they were about to be parted from Jesus, and were almost beside themselves with grief: "Let not your heart be troubled. . . ."

I. THE DESIRE TO BE WITH CHRIST.—This was paramount. These simple men had little thought of heaven as such. If Christ had begun to speak of golden pavement, gates of pearl, and walls of chrysolite, they would have turned from His glowing words with the one inquiry, "Wilt Thou be there?" If that question had been answered uncertainly, they would have turned away heart-sick, saying: "If Thou art not there, we have no desire for it; but if Thou wert in the darkest, dreariest spot in the universe, it would be heaven to us."

There were three desires, the strands of which were woven in this one yearning desire and prayer to be with Christ. They wanted His love, His teaching, His leading into

full, richer life. And is not this our position also? We want Christ, not hereafter only, but here and now, for these three self-same reasons.

We want His love.—There is no love like His—so pure and constant and satisfying. What the sun is to a star-light, and the ocean to a pool left by the retiring tide, such is the love of Jesus compared with all other love. To have it is superlative blessedness; to miss it is to thirst forever.

We want His light.—He speaks words that cast light on the mysteries of existence, on the dark problems of life, on the perplexing questions which are perpetually knocking at our doors.

We want His life.—Fuller and more abundant life is what we crave. It is of life that our veins are scant. We desire to have the mighty tides of divine life always beating strongly within us, to know the energy, vigor, vitality of God's life in the soul. And we are conscious that this is to be found only in Him.

Therefore we desire to be with Him, to drink deeper into His fellowship, to know Him and the power of His resurrection, to be brought into an abidingness from which we shall never recede. We have known Christ after the flesh; we desire to know Him after the Spirit. We have known Him in humiliation; we want to know Him in His glory. We have known Him as the Lamb of the Cross; we want to know Him as the Divine Man on the throne.

II. THE FATAL OBSTACLE TO THE IMMEDIATE GRANTING OF THESE DESIRES.—"Thou canst not follow Me *now*." There is thus a difference in His words to His disciples, and those

to the Jews. These also were told that they could not follow Him, but the word now was omitted. There was no hope held out to them of the great gulf being bridged. That was the *cannot* of moral incompatibility; this, of temporary unfitness, which by the grace of God would finally pass away, and the whole of their aspirations be realized (John vii. 34; viii. 21).

It is easy to see why Peter was unfit for the deeper realization of Christ in His resurrection. Our Lord had just spoken of being glorified through death. It was as Judas left the chamber, intent on his betrayal, that Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified!" He saw that the hidden properties of His being could only be unfolded and uttered through death and resurrection. But Peter had little sympathy with this; he might avow his determination to die, but he had never really entered into the meaning of death, and all it might involve.

He could not detect evil. The traitor was beside him; but he had to ask the beloved disciple to elicit from Jesus who it might be by whom the Master would be betrayed.

He was out of sympathy with the Lord's humiliation, so that he chode with Him for stooping to wash his feet; and if he could not understand the significance and necessity of this lowly deed of love, how could he enter into the spirit of that life which was planted in death, and which bore even in resurrection the print of the nails?

He strove with the rest for the primacy. Who should be the greatest? was the question that agitated them, as the other evangelists tell us, in that solemn hour. And none that was possessed with that spirit of pride and emulation could be in harmony with that blessed world where the greatest