

Exposition of the Gospel of John CHAPTER 47

CHRIST'S WARNINGS

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Transcript

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John 13:21-38

Below is an Analysis of the passage which is to be before us:— 1. The betrayer and his identification, verses 21-26. 2. The departure of Judas and the thoughts of the Eleven, verses 27-30. 3. A threefold glorification, verses 31-32. 4. The new commandment, verse 34. 5. The badge of Christian discipleship, verse 35. 6. Peter's questions, verses 36-37. 7. Christ's warning prediction, verse 38. We have entitled this chapter Christ's Warnings: it scarcely covers everything in the passage, yet it emphasizes that which is most prominent in it. At the beginning of our present section Christ warns Judas; at the close, He warns Peter. In between, there are some gracious and tender instructions for the beloved disciples, and these too partake very largely of the nature of warnings. He warns them against misinterpreting the nature of His death, John 13:31-32. He warns them of His approaching departure, John 13:33. He warns them of their need of a commandment that they should "love one another", John 13:34. He warns them that only by the exercise of love toward each other would it be made manifest that they were His disciples, John 13:35. Our passage opens with a solemn word identifying the Savior's betrayer. This betrayer had been plainly announced in Old Testament prophecy: "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me" (Ps. 41:9). "A man's foes," said the Lord, "are they of his own household" (Matthew 10:36), and fearfully was this verified in His own case. A "familiar friend" became a familiar fiend. How this exposes the error of those who suppose that all that fallen man needs is example and instruction. Judas enjoyed both, yet was not his evil heart moved. For three years had he been not only in the closest possible contact, but in the nearest intimacy with the Savior. His had been a favored place in the innermost circle of the Twelve. Not only had he listened to the daily preaching of Christ as He taught the people, not only had he witnessed most, at least, of His wondrous miracles, but he had also gazed upon the perfections of Christ in His private life. And yet, after all this, Judas was unmoved and unchanged. Nothing could more forcefully demonstrate our Lord's utterance, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God"! So near to Christ, yet unsaved! What a challenge for every heart! The case of Peter points a most solemn warning of quite another character. Outwardly Judas posed as a disciple of Christ; inwardly Simon was a

believer in Him. The one exhibits the sin and madness of hypocrisy; the other the danger and sad results of self-confidence. It was to Peter that the Lord said, "The spirit (the new nature) indeed is willing, but the flesh (the natural man) is weak." But this utterance was never intended as an excuse, behind which we might take refuge when we fail and fall; but was given as a lasting warning to have "no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3). The Holy Spirit has faithfully recorded the sad defection of one who was especially dear to the heart of the Savior, that all Christians who follow Him might seek grace from God to avoid the snare into which he fell. From a human view, Peter failed at his strongest point. By nature he was bold and courageous. Probably there was not a stouter heart among the apostles. He quailed not before the marvellous scene on the Mount of Transfiguration. He it was who stepped out of the ship and started to walk across the waves to Christ. And he it was who drew his sword in the Garden, and smote the high priest's servant as the officers arrested his beloved Master. No coward was Peter. And yet he trembled in the presence of a maid, and when taxed with being a disciple of Christ, denied it with an oath! How is this to be explained? Only on the ground that in order to teach him and us the all-important lesson, that if left to ourselves, the strongest is as weak as water. It is in conscious weakness that our strength lies (2 Cor. 12:10). Peter was fully assured that though all should be offended yet would not he (Mark 14:29). And, without a doubt, he fully meant what he said. But he did not know himself; he had not learned, experientially, the exceeding deceitfulness of the human heart; he knew not as yet that without the upholding power and sustaining grace of the Lord he could do nothing (John 15:5). O that we might learn from him. "We fancy sometimes, like Peter, that there are some things we could not possibly do. We look pityingly upon others who fall, and plume ourselves in the thought that at any rate we should not have done so. We know nothing at all. The seeds of every sin are latent in our hearts, even when renewed, and they only need occasion, or carelessness, or the withdrawal of God's grace for a season, to put forth an abundant crop. Like Peter, we think we can do wonders for Christ, and like Peter, we learn by bitter experience that we have no might and power at all. A humble sense of our own innate weakness, a constant dependency on the Strong for strength, a daily prayer to be held up, because we cannot hold up ourselves—these are the true secrets of safety" (Bishop Ryle). Surely the outstanding lesson for us in connection with the fall of Peter is this: "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). "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" (John 13:21). The Lord had been ministering to His disciples, teaching and comforting them. He had spoken of their future, but in the midst of these anticipations a dark shadow falls upon Him, troubling Him. Already had He hinted at it, now He proceeds to testify more plainly to the traitor who was among the Twelve. The Lord was "troubled in spirit." It is remarkable that this is mentioned most frequently by the very Evangelist whose special design it was to portray the Lord Jesus as God manifest in flesh—cf. John 11:33, 38; 12:27. These statements prove the reality of His humanity, showing that He had a real human soul as well as body. They also prove that it is no infirmity or imperfection to be troubled by the presence of evil. Christ was no stoic: He felt keenly all that was contrary to God. Really, none was so truly and so completely sensitive as He. He was the Man of sorrows, and it is just because He has Himself passed through this scene, suffering within at every step of the way, that He is able to be touched with "the feeling of our infirmities." "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." It is well to remind ourselves that what the Lord Jesus endured upon the Cross was but the climax and completion of His sufferings. Throughout His life He suffered at the hands of Satan, His enemies, and His friends. He felt acutely the unbelief and hostility of the scribes and Pharisees. His tearful lament over Jerusalem evidences the depths of His anguish over Israel's rejection. Here it was the bitter sorrow of seeing one of the apostles deliberately becoming an apostate. Nothing wounds more deeply than ingratitude; and that

one, who had been a constant companion with Him for three years, should now raise his heel against Him, was a sore trial. If Judas was unmoved, the Lord was not. Seeing no beauty in Christ after all he had heard and witnessed during years of closest contact with Him, unaffected by His marvellous grace to sinners, caring only for paltry gain, dominated by self, and the rebuke he had received in Simon's house rankling within, he turned against his Master and arranged to sell Him to His enemies. No wonder the Lord was "troubled" as He thought of such deceit, treachery, and cupidity. He had said "Ye are clean, but not all," and still Judas retained his place, and gave no sign of retiring. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me." There is a melancholy emphasis on the pronoun here: one of you at the table with Me; one of you whose feet I have just washed; one of you who have had the high honor of being My first ambassadors, shall take advantage of your intimacy with Me and knowledge of My ways, to guide the enemy to My place of retirement, and deliver Me into the hands of those who seek My life. He was "troubled" by the enormity of the crime, and no doubt, too, over the awful doom which lay before Judas. How deeply "troubled" the Savior was we may learn from His words in Psalm 55: "Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets. For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together and walked unto the house of God in company" (verses 11-14). How vividly this brings out before us the grief with which the Man of sorrows was "acquainted"! How deeply His holy soul was stirred, we may learn from the solemn but righteous imprecations which He called down upon the base ingrate in Psalm 109: "Let his days be few; and let another take his office; let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow" (verses 8, 9), etc. "Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake" (John 13:22). Three things are made very evident by this verse: one thing about the disciples, one about Judas, and one about the Lord Himself. First, it is plain that what Christ had said in John 13:18 had made no impression upon the Eleven. And this was the most natural. No doubt their minds were so occupied with what the Savior had just done for them that they had scarcely recovered from their surprise. They were so impressed by His amazing condescension that His statement "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me" fell upon ears that heeded Him not. But now He speaks more plainly and directly, and they exchanged puzzled glances with each other, wondering which of them it was to whom He had referred. Second, the fact that "The disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake" is proof positive that Judas had succeeded in concealing his turpitude from his fellows. His outward conduct had given the other apostles no occasion to suspect him. To what lengths cannot hypocrisy go! Matthew tells us that when Christ announced to the Twelve that one of them should betray Him, "They were exceedingly sorrowful, and began every one of them to say, Lord, is it I?" (Matthew 26:22), upon which Matthew Henry says: "They are to be commended for their charity, in that they are more jealous of themselves than of each other. It is the law of charity to hope the best, because we assuredly know, therefore we may justly expect, more evil of ourselves than of our brethren. They are also to be commended for their acquiescence in what Christ said. They trusted, as we would do well to do, more to His words, than to their own hearts, and therefore do not say, 'It is not—it cannot be—I'; but 'Lord, is it I?' See if there be such a way of wickedness, such a root of bitterness in me, and discover it to me, that I may pluck up the root, and stop up that way." Boldly playing his role of duplicity to the last, Judas dares to ask, "Master, is it I?" (Matthew 26:25)—a clear proof, though, that he was unsaved, for no man can say Lord Jesus but by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). Third, the fact that the apostles were perplexed, wondering to whom the Lord had referred, brings out most blessedly the infinite patience with which Christ had borne with the son of perdition. Throughout His ministerial life He must have treated Judas with the same condescending grace, gentleness, kindness, as the Eleven. He could

not have exhibited any aversion against him, or the others would have noticed it, and known now of whom He spake. How this tells of the perfections of our Savior! His kindness ill-requited, His favors unappreciated, His holy soul loathing such a sink of iniquity so near to Him—yet He bowed to the sovereign will and authoritative word of the Father, and patiently bore this trial. "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23). Here is one of those striking contrasts in which this Gospel abounds, and a most blessed one it is. Our attention is diverted for a moment from the base treachery and horrible hatred of Judas to one whom Christ had attracted, whose heart had been won by His beauty, and who now affectionately reposed on the Savior's breast. It is blessed, and an evident mark of the Holy Spirit's guidance to see how John here refers to himself. It was not "one who loved Jesus," though truly he did; but "one of his disciples whom Jesus loved." Nor does he mention his own name—love never advertises itself. "Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake" (John 13:24). This is one of many statements in the New Testament which effectually disposes of the Roman Catholic figment that Peter was the pope of the apostolate. As one of the older Protestant writers well said, "So far from Peter having any primacy among the apostles, he here uses the intercession of John." There was no doubt a moral reason why Peter put his question through John, instead of asking it direct. Is it not clear from John 13:6, 8, 37 that Peter's state of soul was not altogether right before God? And, does not his fearful fall, that very evening, supply still further proof? Matthew tells us that after the arrest of the Savior, Peter "followed him afar off unto the high priests' palace" (Matthew 26:38), and a sense of distance began to make itself felt in Peter's soul even here—there was a measure of reserve between himself and the Lord. "He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?" (John 13:25). The contrast here between John and Peter is very noticeable. John was close to the Lord: affection had drawn him there. He was so near to Christ and his spirit so unclouded, he could look up into the face of the Savior and ask Him any question. This is the blessed portion and privilege of every Christian. Alas! that so many are like Peter on this occasion—ready to turn to a brother, rather than to the Lord Himself. Why is it that when the average Christian meets with some difficulty in his reading of the Word, or some problem in his spiritual life, he says, "I will ask or write brother so-and-so?" Why not enjoy the blessed privilege of referring directly to the Lord Jesus? It is a question of intimacy with Him, and that is very searching. While there is any self-confidence, as in Peter's ease, or any known hindrance in my spiritual life, that at once places me at a moral distance from Christ. But is it not blessed to see that, at the end, Peter came to the same place which John is seen occupying here? "And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee" (John 21:17). He threw open his heart. What was it but saying, Lord, there was a time when I would not ask You questions, but now I can invite You to look into my heart! Let us then come before Him now, asking Him to search our hearts and put His finger on anything that hinders us from having direct access to Him in everything. Let us ever be on the watch that we do not enjoy a greater intimacy with some brother than with the Lord Himself. "Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it" (John 13:26). It seems clear from what follows that these words of Christ must have been whispered to John or spoken in such a low tone that the other disciples were unable to catch them. At last the Lord Jesus identified the betrayer. The mask of hypocrisy which he had worn had thoroughly deceived the apostles, but He with whom "all things are naked and open" cannot be imposed upon. While man looked on the outward appearance, He looks upon the heart; so He now unmask the false disciple, and shows him to be—what He always knew, though none else suspected that he was—a traitor. "And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon" (John 13:26). The sign given by Christ to identify the betrayer was suggestive and solemn. "It was a mark of honor for the host to give a Portion to one of the guests. The Lord had appealed to the conscience of Judas in John 13:21, now He appeals to his

heart" (Companion Bible). The "sop" was, most probably, a piece of unleavened bread, now dipped in the sauce prepared for the eating of the paschal lamb. That Judas accepted it shows the unthinkable lengths to which he carried his hypocrisy. Determined as he was to perpetrate the foulest treachery, yet he hereby renews his pledge of friendship. It makes us think of the "Hail Master" and the "kiss" when he was in the act of delivering Him to His enemies. But how wonderful, how blessed, the meekness of our Lord; surely none but He could have acted thus. In complete command of Himself, no sign of ill-will toward the one who had already taken counsel with the chief priests, He gives him the sop. Closely did this correspond with the prophetic declaration already referred to, "He that eateth with me hath lifted up his heel against me." "And after the sop Satan entered into him" (John 13:27). The receiving of the sop, expressive of friendship, ought to have broken him down in an agony of repentance; but it did not. He was like those mentioned in Hebrews 6:8: ground on which the rain came oft, but which instead of bringing forth herbs, bore only thorns and briars, whose end is to be burned. It is remarkable to note that not until now are we told of Satan's entrance into him. Equally striking is it to observe that as soon as he had received the "sop" the Enemy took full possession of his only too willing victim. "Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly" (John 13:27). Fearful words were these. Space for repentance had now passed forever. His doom was sealed. But what else lay behind these words of Christ? We believe it was the formal announcement of the Savior surrendering Himself to the Father's will. It was as though He said, I am ready to be led as a lamb to the slaughter; go, Judas, and do that which you are so anxious to do; I will not withstand thee! But again; may we not regard this word of Christ as in one sense parallel with the one He had addressed to the Devil at the close of the great temptation. There was a needs-be for Him to be tempted of the Devil for forty days; but when that needs-be was fully met, He said, "Get thee hence, Satan" (Matthew 4:10). So, in order that Scripture might be fulfilled, it was necessary for there to be a Judas in the apostolate, so that he could eat with Christ. But now that prophecy had been accomplished, now that the traitor's heel had been lifted against his Master, Christ says, "Depart"! Moreover, was not this the formal dismissal of Judas from the Lord's service? Christ had called him to a place in the apostolate: for three years He had used him: now He announces his discharge; later, another shall "take his bishoprick." Finally, we believe it can be established from the other Gospels that it was right after this that the Lord instituted His own "supper" as a lasting memorial of Himself; but before doing so He first banishes the traitor, for that "supper" is for His own only. "Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him" (John 13:28). At this point John, at least, and most probably Peter also, knew who it was who should betray their beloved Master, yet in the light of this verse it is evident that none of them suspected that the act of treachery was so soon to be perpetrated. None of them perceived the awfulness of the issues then pending. "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" (John 13:29). "These thoughts of the disciples were mistaken ones, but they do them no discredit. They are excusable and even praiseworthy. They indicate the operation of the charity which thinketh no evil, but is ever disposed to put on words and actions the most favorable construction they will reasonably admit. The mistakes of charity are wiser and better than the surmises of censoriousness, even when they turn out to be according to the truth. Judas had all along been a bad man; but hitherto he had given no such evidence of his unprincipled character as would have warned his fellow-disciples to entertain suspicions of him. Knowing that he was the treasurer and steward of this little society, they supposed that the words of the Master might refer to his speedily obtaining something which would be requisite for the feast of the passover, which lasted for a week; that he should immediately give some alms to the poor. "It is plain from these words that our Lord and His disciples were in the habit of giving, especially at the time of the great festivals, out of their scanty pittance, something to those more destitute than themselves.

Their 'deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality': and by His example He has taught us not merely that it is the duty of those who may have but little to spare to give of that little to those who have still less, but that religious observances are gracefully connected with deeds of mercy and alms-giving. He joined humility with piety in His practice as well as in His doctrine; and in this He hath left us an example that we should follow His steps" (Dr. John Brown). To these remarks we may add that the fact the disciples had supposed Judas had gone to purchase things for "the feast" is clear proof that the Lord did not work miracles in order to procure the food needed by Himself and His apostles. It also shows that they did not beg, but managed their temporal affairs with prudence and economy (cf. John 4:8). But far different were the base designs of Judas from what the apostles had charitably supposed. "It was not to buy things needful, but to sell the Lord and Master; it was no preparation for the feast, but that to which it, not they, had ever looked onward—the fulfillment of God's mind and purpose in it, though it were the Jews crucifying their own Messiah, by the hands of lawless men; it was not that Judas should give to the poor, but that He should who was rich yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich" (Bible Treasury). "He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night" (John 13:30). There is something more here, something deeper, than a mere reference to the time of the day. As Judas went forth on his dastardly errand, there then began that "hour" of the Power of darkness (Luke 22:53), when God suffered His enemies to put out the Light of life. So, too, it was "night" in the soul of Judas, for he had turned his back on "the light." Like Cain he went out from the "presence of the Lord"; like Baalim he loved "the wages of unrighteousness"; like Ahithophel he went to betray his "familiar friend." It was night: "Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil": fitting time was it, then, for the son of perdition to perpetrate his dark deed! "Immediately" he went: his feet were "swift to shed blood"! "Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified" (John 13:31). A most remarkable word was this. The Lord Jesus spoke of His death, but He regarded it neither as a martyrdom nor as a disgrace. There is nothing quite like this in the other Gospels. Here, as ever, John gives us the highest, the Divine viewpoint of things. The Savior contemplates His death on the shameful tree as His glorification. "It seems very strange that, in these circumstances, Jesus should say, 'Now—now is the Son of man glorified.' It would not have been wonderful if, on the banks of Jordan after His baptism, with the mystic dove descending and abiding on Him, and the voice of the Eternal pealing from the open heaven, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'; or, on the summit of the Mount of Transfiguration, when 'His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as the light,' and Moses and Elijah appeared with Him in glory, and a voice came forth from the cloud of glory. 'This is my beloved Son, hear him,' our Lord had said, in holy exaltation, 'Now is the Son of man glorified'! But, when these words were spoken, what was before the Redeemer but the deepest abasement, and the severest sufferings—heavy accusations—a condemnatory sentence—insults—infamy—the fellowship of thieves—the agonies of death—the lonely sepulcher! How does He, in these circumstances, say, 'Now is the Son of man glorified'" (Dr. John Brown). But wherein was Christ's death on the Cross His glorification? Notice, first, that He said, "Now is the Son of man glorified." It was the Son of God as incarnate who was "glorified" on the Cross. But how? Wherein? First, in that He there performed the greatest work which the whole history of the entire universe ever witnessed, or ever will witness. For it the centuries waited; to it the centuries look back. Second, because there He reversed the conduct of the first man. The first Adam was disobedient unto death, the last Adam was obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. The glory of man is to glorify God; and never was God more glorified than when His own incarnate Son laid down His life in submission to His command (John 10:18); and never was human nature so glorified as when the Son of man thus glorified God. Third, because through death He destroyed him who had the power of death, that is the devil (Heb. 2:14). What a notable achievement was this, that One made in the

likeness of sin's flesh should accomplish the utter defeat of the arch-enemy of God and man! Fourth, because at the Cross was paid the ransom-price which purchased for Himself all the elect of God. What glory for the Son of man was this, that He should do what none other in all the realm of creation could do (through immeasurable suffering and shame)—"bring many sons unto glory." The manner in which He wrought this work also glorified Him: He was a willing sufferer; the price was cheerfully paid; He was led, not driven, as a lamb to the slaughter; He endured the Cross, despising the shame; and not until offended justice and a broken law were fully satisfied did He cry, "It is finished." Finally, by virtue of His Cross-work, a glory was acquired by the Mediator: there is now a glorified Man at God's right hand (John 17:22). "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:10). "And God is glorified in him" (John 13:31). What a theme! One which no human pen can begin to do justice to. The Cross-work of Christ was not only the basis of our salvation, and the glorification of the Son of man Himself, but it was also the brightest manifestation of the glory of God. Every attribute of Deity was superlatively magnified at Calvary. The power of God was exceedingly glorified at the Cross. There the kings of the earth and the rulers took counsel together against God and against His Christ; there the terrible enmity of the carnal mind and the desperate wickedness of the human heart did their worst; there the fiendish malignity of Satan was put forth to its fullest extent. But God had laid help upon One that is mighty (Ps. 89:19). None was able to take His life from the Savior (John 10:18). After man and Satan had done their worst, the Lord Jesus remained complete master of Himself, and not until He saw fit did He lay down His life of Himself: never was the power of God more illustriously displayed. Christ was crucified "through weakness" (2 Cor. 13:4), offering no resistance to His enemies: but it is written, "The weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor. 1:25), and gloriously was that demonstrated at the Cross, when the power of God sustained the humanity of Christ as He endured His outpoured wrath. The justice of God was exceedingly glorified at the Cross. Of old He declared that He "will by no means clear the guilty" (Ex. 34:7), and when the Lord laid on our blessed Substitute "the iniquities of us all" He hung there as the Guilty One. And God is so strictly and immutably just that He would not spare His own Son when He had made Him to be sin for us. He would not abate the least mite of that debt which righteousness demanded. The penalty of the broken law must be enforced, even though it meant the slaying of His well Beloved. Therefore did the cry go forth, "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the Shepherd" (Zech. 13:7). The justice of God was more illustriously glorified by the propitiation which was made by the Lord Jesus than if every member of the human race were to suffer in Hell forever. The holiness of God was exceedingly glorified at the Cross. He is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13), and when Christ was "made a curse for us" (Gal. 3:13) the thrice Holy One turned away from Him. It was this which caused the agonizing Savior to cry, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Never did God so manifest His hatred of sin as in the sufferings and death of His Only-begotten. There He showed it was impossible for Him to be at peace with that which had raised its defiant head against Him. All the honor due to the holiness of God by all the holy angels, and all the cheerful obedience and patient suffering of all the holy men who have ever existed, or ever will exist, are nothing in comparison with the offering of Christ Himself in order that every demand of God's holiness, which sin had outraged, might be fully met. The faithfulness of God was exceedingly glorified at the Cross. God had sworn, "The soul that sinneth it shall die," and when the Sinless One offered to receive the full and fearful wages of sin, God showed to all heaven and earth that He had rather that the blood of His Fellow be spilt than that one tittle of the Word should fail. In the Scriptures He had made it known that His Son should be led as a lamb to the slaughter, that His hands and His feet should be pierced, that He should be numbered with transgressors, that He should be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. These and many other predictions received

their exact fulfillment at Calvary, and their accomplishment there supplied the greatest proof of all that God cannot lie. The love of God was exceedingly glorified at the Cross. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). "The light of the sun is always the same, but it shines brightest at noon. The Cross of Christ was the noon-tide of everlasting love—the meridian-splendor of eternal mercy. There were many bright manifestations of the same love before; but they were like the light of the morning that shines more and more unto the perfect day; and that perfect day was when Christ was on the Cross, and darkness covered all the land" (McLaurin). O when we view God's grand design,
To save rebellious worms, How vengeance and compassion join
In their sublimest forms!

Our thoughts are lost in rev'rent awe— We love and we adore; The first archangel never saw So much of God before!

Here each Divine perfection joins, And thought can never trace, Which of the glories brightest shines—
The justice or the grace.

"If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him" (John 13:32). "This verse may be paraphrased as follows: 'If God the Father be specially glorified in all His attributes by My death, He shall proceed at once to place special glory on Me, for My personal work, and shall do it without delay, by raising Me from the dead, and placing Me at His right hand.' It is the same idea that we have in the seventeenth chapter more fully. 'I have glorified thee on the earth; now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self'" (Bishop Ryle). "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you" (John 13:33). Here for the first time the Lord Jesus addressed His disciples by this special term of endearment, "little children." It is striking to observe that the Lord waited until after Judas had gone out before using it: teaching us that unbelievers must not be addressed as God's "children"! "Ye shall seek Me" tells of their love for Him, as the "little children" had expressed His love for them. "Whither I go, ye cannot come" seems to have a different force from what it signified when addressed to the unbelieving Jews in John 7:33. He declared to them, "I go unto him that sent me . . . and where I am, thither ye cannot come." The reference is the same in John 8:21. But here the Savior was not speaking of His return to the Father, but of His going to the Cross—thither "they" could not come. In His great work of redemption He was alone. Just as in the type, "There shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he (the high priest) goeth in to make an atonement" (Lev. 16:17), so in the antitype. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34). "The immense importance of Christian love cannot possibly be shown more strikingly than the way that it is urged on the disciples in this place. Here is our Lord leaving the world, speaking for the last time, and giving His last charge to the disciples. The very first subject He takes up and presses on them is the great duty of loving one another, and that with no common love; but after the same patient, tender, unwearied manner that He had loved them. Love must needs be a very rare and important grace to be so spoken of! The want of it must needs be plain proof that a man is no true disciple of Christ. How vast the extent of Christian love ought to be" (Bishop Ryle). "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." The nation now disappears. It is no question of loving one's neighbor, but of Christ's disciples, and their mutual love according to His love. Nor is it here activity of zeal, in quest of sinners, blessed as that is; but the unselfish seeking of the good of saints, as such, in lowliness of mind. The Law required love of one's neighbor, which was a fleshly relationship; Christ enjoins love to our brethren, which is a spiritual relationship. Here, then, is the first sense in which this

"commandment" was a new one. But there is a further sense brought out by John in his Epistle: "A new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you" (1 John 2:8). Love had now been manifested, yea, personified, as never before. Christ had displayed a love superior to the faults of its objects, a love which never varied, a love which deemed no sacrifice too great. Scott has well observed on this new commandment, "Love was now to be explained with new clearness, enforced by new motives and obligations, illustrated by a new example, and obeyed in a new manner." "By this shall all know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). Love is the badge of Christian discipleship. It is not knowledge, nor orthodoxy, nor fleshly activities, but (supremely) love which identifies a follower of the Lord Jesus. As the disciples of the Pharisees were known by their phylacteries, as the disciples of John were known by their baptism, and every school by its particular shibboleth, so the mark of a true Christian is love; and that, a genuine, active love, not in words but in deeds. 1 Corinthians 13 gives a full exposition of this verse. "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 afterwards" (John 13:36). How evident it is that even the Eleven had not grasped the fact that their beloved Master was going to be taken from them! Often as He had spoken to them of His death, it seems to have made no lasting impression upon them. This illustrates the fact that men may receive much religious instruction, and yet take in very little of it, the more so when it clashes with their preconceptions. The Christian teacher needs much patience, and the less he expects from his work, the less will he be disappointed. Christ's words here, "Whither I go" had a different meaning than in John 13:33. There He had spoken of taking His place alone in death: here He refers to His return to the Father, therefore is He careful to add, "thou shalt follow me afterwards." "Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake" (John 13:37). Peter knew and really loved the Lord, but how little he as yet knew himself! It was right to feel the Lord's absence; but he should have heeded better the mild, but grave, admonition that where Christ was going he was not able to follow Him now; he should have valued the comforting assurance that he should follow Him later. Alas! how much we lose now, how much we suffer afterwards, through not laying to heart the deep truth of Christ's words! We soon see the bitter consequences in Peter's history; but we know, from the future words of our Lord in the close of this Gospel, how grace would ensure in the end the favor, compromised by that self-confidence at the beginning, which He here warned against. "But we are apt to think most highly of ourselves, of our love, wisdom, moral courage, and every other good quality, when we least know and judge ourselves in God's presence, as here we see in Peter; who, impatient of the hint already given, breaks forth into the self-confident question, 'Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.' Peter therefore must learn, as we also, by painful experience, what he might have understood even better by subjection of heart, in faith, to the Lord's words. When He warns, it is rash and wrong for us to question; and rashness of spirit is but the precursor of a fall in fact, whereby we must be taught, if we refuse otherwise" (Bible Treasury). "Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice" (John 13:38). Once more the Lord manifests His omniscience, this time by foretelling the fall of one of His own. Utterly unlikely did it seem that a real believer would deny his Lord, and not only so, but at once follow it up with further denials. Little likelihood did there appear that one who was so devoted to Christ, who had enjoyed such unspeakable privileges, and who was expressly warned that he should "watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation," should prove so unworthy. Yet incredible as it might appear to the Eleven the Lord foresaw it all, and here definitely announces the fearful sin of Peter. He knew that so far from Peter laying down his life for His sake, he would that very night try to save his own life, by a cowardly denial that he was His disciple. And yet the Lord did not cast him off. He loved even Peter "unto the end," and after His resurrection sought him out and restored him to fellowship again.

Truly such love passeth knowledge. O that we were so fully absorbed with it that, for very shame, we might be withheld from doing anything that would grieve it. The following questions are to help the student to prepare for the lesson on the first section of John 14:— 1. What is meant by "believe also in me," verse 1? 2. What is meant by the "Father's House," verse 2? 3. How is Christ "preparing a place for us," verse 3? 4. What is meant by "the way," verse 4? 5. What did Philip mean, verse 8? 6. How did the disciples see the Father in Christ, verse 9? 7. What "works' sake" did Christ refer to in verse 11?

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