

Gethsemane to Galilee

Edwin G. Spahr

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plymouthbrethren.org.

Also online at <https://plymouthbrethren.org/series/6292>

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1361 Romuaidez St., Paco, Manila

Republic of the Philippines

Foreword

For almost three decades one of the best known and best loved Evangelical preachers in the city of Manila was Dr. Edwin G. Spahr. His Sunday morning message at Grace Bible Church not only inspired and thrilled the many who gathered but sent them out to live and witness for Christ who was always given the pre-eminence. Dr. Spahr was co-founder and co-principal of Grace Christian High School which now has a student population of over 4,000. This progressive Christian school and three "Grace" churches flourish today due in no small measure to the life and influence of Ed & Helen Spahr as they were commonly known to their associates.

In response to our request Dr. Spahr finally committed to writing these inspiring messages. We trust that having now put his hand to the pen (not plough in this case) that he will not turn back for there is much more in the mind and heart of this beloved man of God which if written could bless the Church of Christ in Asia for many decades to come.

Alfred Johnston

Preface

These expository, devotional meditations have been written primarily for pastors and others in the Philippines, the land of my rich inheritance in the Lord for the past thirty wonderful years. I refer to the inspired statement concerning Abraham: “By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance” (Hebrews 11:8).

What I have learned from others and what may be original are by now so inextricably entwined that I cannot separate them. I trust that it will suffice for me to state that I have drunk deeply of the writings of Alexander Maclaren, G. Campbell Morgan, Arthur W. Pink, and J. C. Ryle. Their beneficent influence upon me permeates these pages, perhaps at times even by unintentionally unacknowledged direct quotation. Dr. K. Schilder’s trilogy:

Christ in His Suffering, Christ on Trial, and
Christ Crucified, and

The Suffering Saviour by F.W. Krummacher also have greatly stimulated my thinking. My constant references have been A.T. Robertson’s

Word Pictures in the New Testament and Strong’s
Exhaustive Concordance.

Edwin G. Spahr

Manila, Philippines 1976

Chapter 1 The Suffering But Triumphant Savior

John 18:1-11

In these pages we will walk with our Suffering Savior and Triumphant Lord from Gethsemane to Galilee. Let us pray that we will be given “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him” (Eph. 1:17). Our meditations will be in the Gospel by John, chapters 18 through 21. Though our eyes will be upon our Lord, we cannot help but note an instructive spiritual progression for the believer as we go to:

- Gethsemane — The place of prayer and yielding to the will of God.
- Gabbatha — The place of being condemned by the world.
- Golgotha — The place of death: Crucified with Christ.
- The Garden Tomb — The place of resurrection: Risen with Christ.
- Galilee — The place where Jesus manifested Himself: Manifesting Christ.

“When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into which He entered, and His disciples” (John 18:1).

The words that He had spoken were His great high-priestly prayer of John, chapter 17. He had taught His followers the disciple’s prayer: “Our Father...” which He, Himself, never needed to pray. But, here in John

chapter 17 we have the Lord's prayer, emblematic of His present ministry at the right hand of the Father where "He ever lives to make intercession for them." Heb. 7:25. "These words" may also include our Lord's discourse in John, chapters 14 through 16.

"He went forth." In Hebrews 13:13, we are exhorted: "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach." Then, we are reminded of His words: "Blessed is he, whoever shall not be offended in Me." Luke 7:23.

"He went forth with His disciples." Even though His walk was unique, because no one could walk there as He did, He still wants us to go with Him. As we do, we can never afterward be the same. "We all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord are being transformed into the same image, even as by the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18). I pray that in our walk with Him we will come to love Him more and become more like Him.

"He went forth with His disciples over the brook Cedron." According to Strong's Concordance, the word cedron (Kidron) means: "dark-colored, by implication, to mourn in sackcloth." What solemn thoughts must have filled the mind of our Lord as He crossed the dark brook! He, David's Greater Son, would recall how King David had fled over the brook from his son, Absalom, as all the country wept (2 Samuel 15:23). In the reforms under Josiah, the grove where the people of Judah worshipped Ashtoreth (the Greek, Aphrodite and the Roman, Venus) was burned at the brook Kidron (2 Kings 23:6). The altars were broken down, smashed, and the dust thrown into the brook (2 Kings 23:12). Asa, king of

Judah, cut down the idol of his mother, Maachah, crushed it, and burned it at Kidron (2 Chronicles 15:16). Under Hezekiah, the priests brought out all of the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the Lord, and the Levites carried it out to the brook Kidron (2 Chronicles 30:14). Kidron was a place for cleansing from defilement. It was more. To cross the brook Kidron meant death for Shimei (I Kings 2:37). Because of his disobedience, the penalty was executed (I Kings 2:46). Crossing the brook meant death for our Lord, also. He became God's Shimei, but by His death for sin He provided cleansing from defilement. For restored Israel, even the brook itself "shall be holy unto the Lord" (Jeremiah 31:40).

Song of Triumph

"Where there was a garden." It was an olive orchard. "After singing a hymn they went out to the Mount of Olives" (Matt. 26:30). It has always been a blessing to me that our Lord went singing to His death. At the Passover meal, selections from the Hallel were sung. That is Psalms 113 to 118. Here the Author sings His own psalms. Perhaps He sang the words of Psalm 118:22, "The Stone which the builders rejected has become the Head-Stone of the corner." And, these words of worship: "This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes" (Psalm 118:23). Who can plumb the depths of His love expressed in Psalm 118:24, "This is the day that the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it." It was already the day of Calvary, because the day begins with evening for the Jews. It does for God, too. "Evening and morning were the first day" (Genesis 1:5). God does not begin with the light to plunge us into

darkness. Rather, often from the womb of night is born the sunrise as with the cross and the empty tomb.

Infinite Love

The Lord rejoiced in the day of Calvary! In the upper room, He gave thanks and took the bread. He again gave thanks and took the cup. He said: "This is My body. This is My blood." He thanked God for the cross. What unfathomable love! For the joy set before Him, He endured the cross (Heb. 12:2). Peter writes of "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Peter 1:11). The glory that He had after He suffered at Calvary that He did not have before was that He would bear a redeemed race to the Father. He knew the agony that the cross entailed, but in complete submission He may have sung: "Bind the sacrifice to the altar" (Psalm 118:27). Perhaps He concluded with His expression of perfect trust: "O, give thanks unto the Lord for He is good, and His mercy endures forever" (Psalm 118:29).

He went into the Garden of Gethsemane. Gethsemane means "Oil Press." It was there that the little ripe olives were placed on the lower platform and the upper one was screwed down, tighter and tighter, until all the life fluid was extracted and nothing was left but a dead, dry pulp. It was a cold night in Gethsemane, for later, Peter warmed his hands at the charcoal fire the slaves and officers had made (v. 18). On that cold night, our Lord was so pressed beyond measure that "being in an agony He prayed more earnestly, and

His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44). How He suffered! "He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be very sorrowful and very heavy. Then He said to

them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even to the point of death" ("all but killed with sorrow") (Matt. 26:37, 38).

Eden vs. Gethsemane

Arthur W. Pink writes these thought-provoking words, contrasting Eden and Gethsemane:

"The entrance of Christ into the Garden at once reminds us of Eden. The contrasts between them are indeed most striking;

In Eden, all was delightful; in Gethsemane, all was terrible.

In Eden, Adam sinned; in Gethsemane, the Savior suffered.

In Eden, Adam fell; in Gethsemane, the Redeemer conquered.

The conflict in Eden took place by day; the conflict in Gethsemane was waged at night.

In Eden, Adam took the fruit from Eve's hand; in Gethsemane, Christ received the cup from the Father's hand.

In Eden, Adam hid himself; in Gethsemane, Christ boldly showed Himself.

In Eden, God sought Adam; in Gethsemane, the last Adam sought God!

In Eden, Adam was 'driven'; in Gethsemane, Christ was 'led.'

In Eden, the sword was drawn (Genesis 3:24); in Gethsemane, the sword was sheathed (John 18:11)."¹

Paradise Regained

Eden was Paradise Lost. Gethsemane is the beginning of Paradise Regained. The Bible begins with a garden, and it ends with a garden. In between, sin has made human history a waste-howling wilderness. But God will have His way. At the conclusion of all things, He shows us “a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (Rev. 22:1,2). In Eden, the flaming sword turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life (Genesis 3:24). No one must be permitted to eat in his sinful condition and in that state live forever. In Gethsemane, the sword is sheathed so that whoever will may come to Christ and drink of the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17), and one day dwell forever where the tree of life bears fruit eternally.

“Now, Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place, for Jesus had often met there with His disciples” (v. 2).

Gethsemane was the Savior’s place of retirement and prayer. At the close of a busy day, He might say: “Men, let’s go over to the Garden for a time of prayer.” Judas would go with Him. “Judas knew the place.”

Wanted: A Christ-like Life

It is possible to know much about the Lord and still commit the most dastardly deeds. Knowing, not related to living, is dangerous. Of course, Judas was not regenerated, but even we believers must beware of

professing what we do not live. It is true that correct belief is basic. We must “hold fast the form of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13), or there will be no foundation to our lives. But, if our belief does not affect our behavior, there will be little reality in our Christian profession. It is the entrance of God’s Word that gives light (Psalm 119:130). The Word of God must become a very part of our character and conduct. I read of an elder of a local church whose son went forward in an evangelistic meeting to receive Christ as his Savior. A friend said to his father:

“Why don’t you go up to your son, put your arm around him, and encourage him?”

The Father replied: “I can’t. He knows me too well at home.”

I was speaking once with a very close friend, Mr. Cyril Brooks, who with his wife, Anna, have been missionaries to the Philippines for more than fifty years. I somewhat dolefully remarked: “Isn’t it terrible, this ‘God is Dead’ theology?”

In somewhat gentle rebuke he replied: “Yes, but if we who profess to know a Living Lord, lived as though He were alive, I wonder if there would have been any room for a ‘God is Dead’ theology.”

I read somewhere a statement of Dr. Vance Havner: “We claim that the Gospel is the dynamite of God, but we live firecracker lives.” May God root us in sound doctrine for a Christlike life. What God is seeking to produce on earth is Christlike Christians.

Futile Assault

“Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees came there with lanterns and torches and weapons” (v. 3).

In the early dawn there were flickerings of light and clashes of weapons. At the Passover it was full moon, but Judas and his co-conspirators were taking no chances. How ludicrous and ridiculous they must have appeared to God. They were seeking the Light of the World with lanterns and torches, seeking Omnipotence with swords and clubs (Mark 14:43). “He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision” (Psalm 2:4).

Portraits of Christ

We come now to one of the most beautiful Scriptural portraits of our Lord, in John 18:4-11. Here is the living embodiment of the fine flour of the meal offering of Leviticus, chapter two. There were no lumps or unevenness in it. It was perfectly smooth. In the Lord Jesus, there is every perfection of character in exact proportion. We thus see Him now.

1)

His Omniscience. “Jesus therefore, knowing all things that were coming upon Him” (v. 4). He knew that Judas would come. He knew of the kiss of betrayal, the arrest, the beating, the plucking out of the beard, the scourging, and the crucifying. He knew it all when He went into the Garden, and even from all eternity past. He was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). In warfare, the supreme advantage is gained if you can learn the plans of the enemy. Millions

of dollars are thus expended and many lives are lost in spying. Our Lord knew all, and also had the power to destroy His enemies. Yet, He obeyed even though He knew what He would suffer. Do we ever refuse to obey for fear of what we might suffer?

2)

His Courage. "Jesus therefore, knowing all things that were coming upon Him, went forth, and said to them, Whom do you seek?" (v. 4). How we worship Him for the fearlessness of His pure humanity! He was as much man as though He were not God, and as much God as though He were not man — the two natures perfectly bound together in one person, the God-man, Jesus Christ. "With lanterns and torches" - they thought that He might hide away in the bushes like a hunted animal. Rather, He took the offensive and went forth. He who avoided notoriety (John 5:14) and royalty (John 6:15) went forth willingly to embrace death. What matchless love! He asks: "Who do you seek?" With a sneer and a curl of the lip, they reply: "Jesus, the Nazarene" (v. 5). "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46).

3)

His Majesty (Deity). "He said to them, I Am" (v. 5). "When therefore He said to them, I Am, they went backward and fell to the ground" (v. 6). This was not merely right overwhelming might. It was a flashing forth of His Deity, usually veiled in His sinless humanity. Hear the voice of God speaking to Moses out of the bush that burned but was not consumed: "Thus shall you say to the sons of Israel, I Am has sent me to you" (Exodus 3:14). Jesus said: "Before Abraham was, I Am" (John 8:58). "I Am" is Jehovah, the eternal, uncreated, self-

existent, everlasting, redeeming LORD. In Gethsemane, the Deity of the Lord Jesus flashed forth and they fell on their faces on the ground.

4)

His Meekness. Behold Him quietly standing there. They were at His mercy. He could easily have escaped, but meekly He waits. In His majesty and meekness there is the fine flour of the meal offering. In His majesty and meekness there is His Deity and humanity. At His birth there were angels and shepherds, a star and a stable — so heavenly and so earthly. He is the God-man.

He quietly waits, while they lie, thrown to the ground, so that He might prove to both friend and foe that His death was entirely voluntary. “For this reason the Father loves Me because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father” (John 10:17, 18). If Christ died because He chose to die, why did He choose to die? The primary compulsion of our Lord in going to the cross was not to save you and me. The pressing passion of His heart was “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God” (Heb. 10:7). Doing His Father’s will was the heart of Calvary. This, not the nails, was the first cord that bound Him to the cross. Yet, in doing the Father’s will He also secured our salvation. This was the second cord that kept Him there. He could not let us remain unsaved. Does not His voluntary death compel us to a life-long surrender to Him?

The last sentence of verse five contains some of the saddest words of Scripture: “Judas, who was betraying

Him, was standing with them." My heart cries out, "O Lord, no matter how I may fail, please do not let me ever stand with your enemies against you and Your people."

5)

His Great Love. "If therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way" (v. 8). His death was not only voluntary, it was also substitutionary. He as much as says to them: "Remember, it is I whom you are seeking. Center all of your venom on Me. Let these go their way." Arthur W. Pink notes: "Here is the Shepherd protecting His sheep." Usually, the sheep die to provide food and clothing for the shepherd, but here the Shepherd dies for the sheep to provide forgiveness of sins and eternal life. He had said: "I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:11). This is His great love.

I heard of a little kindergarten girl and her grade one brother who were competing in declaring their love to Mother.

"I love you two times," she said.

With great intellectual superiority, he spoke: "I love you ten times."

Little girl: "I love you twenty times."

Brother: "I love you fifty times."

Little girl: "I love you seventy times."

Brother, triumphantly: "I love you one hundred times."

Poor little girl! They didn't go above one hundred in

\ kindergarten. In desperation she put her little arms around her Mother and exclaimed: "Mommy, I love you to the last number!" He loved us to the last number.

What we need most is a fresh baptism of His love, that we might "'Know the love of Christ which passes knowledge" (Eph. 3:19). Concerning this love, the Apostle Paul testified: "The love of Christ constrains us" (2 Cor. 5:14). It overmasters us, hems us in, deepens us, propels us on so that we can do nothing but love and serve Him. "For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that One died for all, therefore all died; and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. 5:14, 15). In its essence, this is not Paul's love for Christ, but Christ's love for Paul. It is not a smoke ascending, but a fire descending. This is the only true call to Christian service that will hold us steady. Then, love begets love, and "we love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). This is the basic motive in Christian service.

Christ's love for me — The only true call to Christian service.

My love for Christ — The basic motive in Christian service.

6)

His Authority. "Let these go their way" (v. 8). Our Lord is in control in Gethsemane. He commanded His enemies not to touch His friends, and they obeyed Him. There are at least two reasons why He thus spoke.

He must suffer alone for our redemption. He did leave us an example that we should follow in His steps:

“Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth:
Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again;
When He suffered, He threatened not, but committed
Himself to Him who judges righteously” (1 Peter 2:22,
23).

But notice that the next verse is exclusive. Here the
example stops.

“Who

His own self bare our sins in His own body on the
tree” (1 Peter 2:24). He must tread the winepress alone
(Isaiah 63:3).

The second reason why He commanded: “Let these go
their way,” is because their work was not yet finished.
Nothing— cancer, hydrogen bombs, or anything else —
can take us from this life until our task is finished, if we
abide in Him. Then, when our work is done, it would be
abysmal to draw another breath. If we don’t abide (if we
live unto self instead of unto the Lord), we may sleep
(die) as did those sinning believers at Corinth who would
not repent and forsake their sins (1 Cor. 11:30). But, if
we live in the center of the will of God, one day He will
say, “Mission accomplished; come home to heaven.”
Until then, He says: “Let these go their way.”

7)

His Keeping Power. “That the saying might be fulfilled
which He spoke, Of those whom Thou hast given Me, I
have lost none” (v. 9). I do not believe in the
perseverance of the saints, but in the preservation of the
saints and the perseverance of the Savior. My dear
friend, Sandy Sutherland, veteran missionary to Brookes
Point, Palawan, Philippines, one day said to me: “Ed, I’m

a Romans, chapter eight, man.” So am I. We begin with “no condemnation” and end with “no separation.” Since I received the Lord Jesus Christ as my own personal Savior in the summer of 1930,¹ I have never doubted being saved. I have always been “persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day” (2 Tim. 1:12). I have never questioned His ability to guard my soul which I entrusted to Him the night that I was saved. “Who shall also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 1:8). To be saved is to be safe forever.

One day, years ago, Captain James Downing of the U. S. Navy, now with the Navigators, spoke to our Grace Christian High School students in a chapel period. He explained the use of the kedge anchor. When a ship is negotiating a dangerous passage, this anchor is carried forward in the ship’s boat. It is anchored ahead, and the ship is safely drawn up to it. Now, read Hebrews 6:19, 20: “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters within the veil, where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us.” We are safe because He is there.

Did you notice the almost unbelievable words: “those whom Thou hast given Me”? God so loved the world that He gave His Son. God so loved His Son, that He gave you to Him, believer. We could not have believed it if it were not in the Word of God. The ugly duckling of the Song of Songs has become His love, His fair one (Song of Solomon 2:10). He wants you to know “the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” (Eph. 1:18). He wants you to realize not only all that He is to you, but

also all that you are to Him, because of His matchless grace.

8)

His Grace. "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" (v. 10). Peter, surprised out of sleep, with a burst of fleshly zeal lashed out with his sword. He was aiming at Malchus' neck, but got only his ear. Malchus is safe. No one died in the presence of the Lord Jesus when He was here on earth. In this age of grace, He came that we might live. In a coming day, He will have to say to those who have not received Him: "Depart from Me, you accursed, into everlasting fire" (Matt. 25:41).

Dr. Luke is interested in that ear. "Jesus touched his ear and healed him" (Luke 22:51). His last miracle of healing was to restore an ear to a foe who had come to arrest Him. What grace! Mercy is God withholding from us that which we justly deserve. Grace is God giving us that which we do not deserve. Grace is God's love when we deserved His judgment. All men live by the mercy of God. We, believers, live in the grace of God.

"And cut off his right ear." Do we sometimes keep our Lord busy restoring ears that we have cut off in the energy of the flesh? Can you imagine Peter going to Malchus sometime later and saying: "Malchus, I love you in the Lord and I want you to be saved." Can't you see Malchus fingering his right ear and saying: "I don't believe it." If you cut off people's ears, it will be very hard for you to reach their hearts. Also, those cut-off ears have an embarrassing tendency to reappear. "One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the

one whose ear Peter cut off, said, Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" (John 18:26).

"Jesus touched his ear." The Shepherd is still protecting His sheep, especially impulsive Peter. Was He also seeking Malchus' soul with His touch of grace?

9) Lastly,

His Obedience. "The cup which My Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?" What was the terrible cup from which He shrank in His pure humanity? "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me" (Matt. 26:39). No one ever suffered as He suffered. He is the sinless One being made sin. Think of it, all lust was laid on Him who is Incarnate Purity! All lying, cheating, and hypocrisy was placed on Him who is the Truth. All blasphemy, all idolatry, all horrible pagan practices, all agnosticism, and all atheism fell on Him who is God manifest in the flesh. How His holy sensibilities must have suffered in their infinite-ness! And further, He was bearing God's judgment against sin. On the cross, for three hours in the light He suffered the hatred of man, but in three hours of darkness He endured the wrath of God. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31). He did, for us.

The deepest agony of all was the separation. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46). Behold Martin Luther pacing his study and exclaiming: "God forsaken of God. Who can understand it!" From everlasting, He had existed in the eternal oneness of the Trinity. For three dreadful hours in time, the Father turned His face from Him. Sin, wrath, separation, and more, filled the cup.

"Death and the curse were in our cup;

O Christ, 'twas full for Thee! But Thou hast drained the last dark drop,

'Tis empty now for me."

Now, "I will take of the cup of salvation" (Psalm 116:113).

Wanted: A Yielded Life

This is the Savior's Gethsemane. He wants you, believer, also to go with Him to the place of prayer and of yielding to the will of God. I love that Old Testament exposition of Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." It is the testimony of Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, after he had called forth three Hebrew men from the fiery furnace: "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent His angel, and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God" (Daniel 3:28).

That is the believer's Gethsemane. Have you been there, believer? Are you there? You can be, because He who went there indwells you.

"Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Cor. 1:27). Do you fear to obey God? See Him go forth from the Garden and appropriate His courage. You cannot forgive that one who harmed you so much? Behold Him restore the ear to Malchus, and receive His grace. You ask, "How can I know God's will for my life?" Pray to Him who knew all things that were coming upon Him, and He will be made

unto you “wisdom” (1 Cor. 1:30). When world conditions depress you, and the powers of darkness increase, rejoice in the authority of Him who said: “Let these go their way.” In all of life’s circumstances may it be:

“Not I, but Christ” (Gal. 2:20).

1 Exposition of the Gospel of John. Bible Truth Depot, pages 157, 158.

Chapter 2 The Forsaken Master

John 18:12-27

We now begin the long, agonizing walk from Gethsemane to Gabbatha. All was superlative that night they seized our Lord in the Garden.

The Great Submission and Humiliation

“Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound Him” (v. 12). The Savior is arrested and bound, as a criminal today is handcuffed. What shame He suffered! This would prejudice Him as already guilty.

Omnipotence in bonds! Why were they able to bind Him who has all power in heaven and on earth? Until this hour, the hour of Calvary, they were not able to lay a hand on Him. “Then they sought to take Him, but no man laid hands on Him because His hour was not yet come” (John 7:30). “These words spoke Jesus in the treasury as He taught in the temple, and no man laid hands on Him; for His hour was not yet come” (John 8:20). But, in John 17:1 He had prayed, “Father, the hour is come.” Therefore, He submits.

It was Satan’s hour. He said to them in the Garden: “This is your hour and the power of darkness” (Luke 22:53). This hour was born from the womb of night. Satan is the prince of darkness. All the angels are held in check so that the powers of darkness may move freely. After our Lord told Peter to put up the sword, He said to him: “Do you not think that I cannot ask My Father and He shall presently give Me more than twelve

legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:53). But, He would not do Satan injustice. In our righteous redemption even all the demands of hell are satisfied.

It was pre-eminently God's hour. Our Lord had prayed: "Father, the hour is come. Glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee" (John 17:1). Never were God's holiness, justice, mercy, grace, love, His hatred of sin, and His love for sinners so supremely magnified as at Calvary.

The Great Appeal

"and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year" (v. 13). Both Annas and Caiaphas were considered to be high priests (Luke 3:2). Since Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, and older, he exerted greater influence over the Jews. Therefore, they brought Jesus first to him. This preliminary trial before Annas is recorded only by John. Annas questioned our Lord regarding "His disciples and about His teaching" (v. 19). These were the two charges brought against the Lord Jesus: insurrection and blasphemy.

'Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues, and in the temple, where all the Jews come together, and I spoke nothing in secret" ' (v. 20).

The Lord Jesus did not mean that He never taught His disciples privately. He was affirming that His private teachings were the same as His public testimony. Our Lord's life and ministry were an open book. In like manner, the church is no secret society. Let us always be

sure that all we say and do are open to public examination without our ever being embarrassed.

“Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me, what I said to them; they know what I said” (v. 21).

Christian, you are in Annas’ judgment chamber with the Lord Jesus, and His opening words involve you in His trial. The world is still asking: “Who is Jesus; what are His claims, what can He do; is He real?” Jesus points to those who have heard Him, and especially to you who believe in Him, saying: “Ask them; they will tell you.” Please do not beg to be excused as Peter did, and say: “I do not know the man!” (Matt. 26:74).

Does Jesus go so far as to dare to make the testimony regarding Himself dependent upon your witness before the tribunal of the world? I once read of a Christian who was meditating in His evening devotions concerning the ascension of our Lord. When he retired for the night, he dreamed that he was present in heaven when the Lord Jesus returned there in triumph. In his dream, he heard the angel Gabriel say:

“Great Lord of Glory, You went down to that little ball of dust and died for those creatures there that they might become the children of God and one day come here to be with us in heaven. You have completed the mighty work of redemption. Now, what is Your plan for the success of Your mission?”

Our Lord replied:

“My plan is that those who believe in Me should tell someone else.”

“But if that plan fails, what other program do you have?” asked Gabriel.

The Lord Jesus solemnly answered:

“I have no other plan.”

This is the great appeal: “Ask those who have heard Me.” Just before He ascended back to heaven, He said to His disciples: “Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

“You are witnesses of these things.” (Luke 24:46-48). He has

“committed to us the word of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:19).

The Great Injustice.

‘And when He had said this, one of the officers standing by gave Jesus a blow, saying, “Is that the way You answer the high priest?” ’ (v. 22). This is might attempting to crush right. All is unjust here. It was illegal for the Sandhedrin to pass judgment at night. A day must intervene between the passing of sentence and its execution. Christ was outlawed that He might fulfill the law for us.

‘Jesus answered him, “If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?” ’ (v. 23).

Men may hate Jesus, and some do, but no one can disprove His sinlessness. Through the centuries, He has hurled His unanswered challenge: “Who of you convinces Me of sin?” John 8:46. Our friends tend to

gloss over our sins, but even Jesus' enemies testify of His sinlessness:

Judas: "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood" (Matt. 22:4).

Pilate: "I find no fault in Him at all" (John 18:38).

Pilate's wife: "Have nothing to do with that just man" (Matt. 27:19).

A soldier at the cross: "Certainly this was a righteous Man" (Luke 23:47). We also hear the words of the repentant thief: "This Man has done nothing amiss" (Luke 23:41). If they had not spoken, perhaps even the stones would have cried out.

The Great Affirmation.

"Now Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest!" (v. 24). It was Caiaphas who asked the Lord Jesus: "Are You the Christ, the Son of the blessed?" (Mark 14:61). It would seem that all the universes paused in their courses and all creation waited with bated breath to hear His answer. "And Jesus said, I am" (Mark 14:62). In the Word of God the fundamental truth of our faith is the Deity of Christ. He had told Peter that it was upon this rock-truth that He would build His church (Matt. 16:16,18).

In asserting His Deity -the Lord Jesus had said to the Jews: "I and My Father are one" (John 10:31). If He were not God manifest in the flesh, the Jews were right. He would have deserved to be stoned to death for blasphemy (Lev. 24:16). Many who do not believe in Him would say that He was a good man, even the best man who ever lived. But, if He is not God, He is not good. Others acknowledge Him as the world's greatest

teacher, but say that they cannot believe that He is the Son of God. It is psychologically impossible to accept Him as the greatest teacher while rejecting His foundational teaching: His Deity. The night before He died, He said to Philip: "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). He is God, or else He is the world's greatest deceiver, or an insane megalomaniac obsessed with delusions of grandeur. No one, examining the life of the historical Christ, could ever say this about Him. Yet, there is no middle ground, and He demands a decision. With Thomas we stoutly affirm: "My Lord and my

God" (John 20:28). There are some, too, who state that we misunderstand the Lord Jesus — that He never intended that we should believe that He is God and the only Savior of men. You will notice that He fully accepted this statement of Thomas and even pronounced a blessing upon those who would likewise believe even though they had not seen Him with their physical eyes. "Jesus said to him, Thomas, because you have seen you have believed; blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29). Believed what? That He is our Lord and our God.

The Great Denial.

'Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They said therefore to him, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" He denied it, and said, "I am not." One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?" Peter therefore denied it again; and immediately a cock crowed' (vs. 25-27). Peter is a battleground of conflicting emotions. Love would not

let him completely run away. Cowardice made him afraid to show his true colors. Those are ominous words which are recorded in verse eighteen: "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 warmer his hands got the colder his heart got, for there is no warmth at the world's fire for the believer. In John 15:19 the Lord Jesus had told His men: "You are not of the world." He did not say that they should not be in the world. Of course, that is true. But, He said that believers are not of the world. This is a statement of spiritual fact. As new creatures in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), our lives can no longer be sustained nor satisfied by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life, which is all that there is in the world (1 John 2:16). A new life-principle enters the life of the believer when he is born-again. Thereafter, no matter how worldly he may chose to be, it will not satisfy him. It will only make him miserable. The Lord Jesus is a jealous God who loves us too much to let us waste our lives in worldliness after we are saved. He will make us uncomfortable until we come back to Him. The only place in all the universe where a true believer can possibly find peace, and joy, and satisfaction is abiding in the center of the will of God. He has made us that way in Christ Jesus.

There are many lessons that we should learn from this sad fall of Peter. We will not throw any stones at Peter. Have you ever walked on water? Peter is far beyond us. Yet,

Peter in Gethsemane is a warning to us.

Note the steps in his backsliding as outlined in Mark chapter 14:

- 1) Self-confidence (v. 29). In the spiritual battle, “have no confidence in the flesh” Phil. 3:3. Such confidence produces
- 2) Proud boasting (v. 21), which will encourage
- 3) Unwatchfulness (v. 37), leading to
- 4) Fleshly activity (v. 47), which always fails in spiritual warfare and results in
- 5) Cowardliness (v. 50), and leads to
- 6) Following afar off (v. 54) to the company of
- 7) Ungodly companions (v. 61). In their fellowship he
- 8) Denied the Lord (v. 68). Finally, being with them, he became like them in
- 9) Ungodly talk (v. 71). “Evil communications corrupt good manners” (“Bad company ruins good morals.”) 1 Cor. 15:33.

It was here that “the Lord turned and looked on Peter” (Luke 22:61). The loving, faithful Savior met Peter at the last agonizing; step of his backsliding “and Peter went out, and wept bitterly” (Luke 22:62). They were precious tears of repentance, bringing forgiveness and restitution.

The Lord Jesus had told Peter: “Satan has desired to have you that he might sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith fail not” (Luke 22:31, 32). Peter’s courage failed, but his faith in the Lord Jesus did not. Why didn’t Jesus pray for Judas? He couldn’t. He had no vital lifelink with Judas. Judas admired Jesus

without receiving Him as His Lord and Savior. The lofty character of Jesus, perhaps inspiring Messianic hopes and freedom from Roman bondage, momentarily held under control Judas' unregenerate nature. Judas had suppression, but not regeneration. Therefore, like hot steam increasingly expanding in a closed pot, he exploded, and what he did, he did quickly (John 13:27). Make sure that you have a vital lifetie with the Lord Jesus. As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12). Have you ever received Him into your heart? If not, you are not a child of God: you are not a Christian, a Christ-one.

Chapter 3 The Mock Trial

John 18:28-40

Christ before Pilate

After the religious trial of Jesus, the civil trial began.

“They led Jesus therefore from Caiaphas to the Hall of Judgment, and it was early” (v. 28). They had bound the Lord Jesus and led Him to Annas (v. 13). Annas sent Him to Caiaphas (v. 24). Afterwards, they brought Him to the Praetorium, the governor’s official residence. The Son of God, was led as a Lamb to the slaughter (Isaiah 53:7).

“Hall of Judgment?” In my Bible I have thus placed a question mark. Where is the vaunted Roman justice, Rome’s legacy of jurisprudence to civilization? Human systems without God cannot bear close scrutiny.

“It was early.” Morning had just dawned on the greatest day in history. I read somewhere that for our Lord, this day dawned with garments dripping blood, but for us it came clothed in fine white linen which is the righteousness of the saints (believers). It was the day of Jesus’ great agony, anticipated since Eden where it was prophesied that the Seed of the woman would bruise the serpent’s head (Genesis 3:15). Who can comprehend what that day meant to God? Who can fathom what it means to us? It was the “birthday of our eternal redemption “ (Krummacher).

“It was early.” The enemies of the Lord Jesus had worked all night. I regret to make the contrast; “Could you not watch with Me one hour?” (Matt. 26:40). Why will men often work harder and longer to do evil than

believers will to do good? Do we give up too easily? The enemies of our Lord did not. They wanted Him crucified. They would have worked the next night, and the next, and the next.

“And they themselves did not enter into the Judgment Hall in order that they might eat the Passover.” (v. 28)

They felt that murdering an innocent man would not defile them, but that entering a Gentile house that was not properly cleansed of leaven, would make them ceremonially unclean and thus disqualify them from eating the Passover. This is ritualism — as long as you keep up the outward forms of religious observances, it does not matter how you live.

One Monday morning I read in the local newspaper of two men who had gone to church the day before and then got into an argument after the service. They began to fight outside the church, and stabbed each other to death.

What good is religion that does not change the heart? “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23). That is why the Gospel begins with a new life which God puts within by the new birth. Then, we work it out in daily living (Phil. 2:12). Man-made religions merely put something on the outside. But, even true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ can be guilty of a kind of ritualism. We can thoughtlessly partake of the Lord’s Supper and then murder someone’s reputation by a slanderous word. We can crucify Christ afresh with impure thoughts, or nail Him to the cross again with envy. “Pilate knew that for envy they had delivered Him” (Matt. 27:18).

Pilate the Pendulum

Pilate therefore went out to them, and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?" (v. 29)

The very structure of Scripture reveals the character of Pilate:

v.28 — Pilate is inside the Praetorium.

v.29—Since they will not go in, lest they be defiled, he goes out to them.

v.33— Failing to secure any charge against the Lord Jesus, He goes in.

v.38 — Overwhelmed by our Lord, Pilate goes out again to the crowd.

19:1— Unable to quell their hatred, he goes in again.

19:4—Seeking to elicit their sympathy, he takes the bleeding Jesus out.

19:8— Helpless before their insincere charge of blasphemy, he takes Jesus inside.

19:12—Finally, he brings Jesus out to Gabbatha.

In and out — Pilate, the Pendulum! He had no courage of his convictions; no strength to stand for what he knew was right. Personal position, not justice, was his only goal. Self-love and expediency motivated him. Pilate's great sin was compromise: trying to walk a middle course between right and wrong. It is impossible.

They answered and said to Him, "If this man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered him up to you" (v. 30).

Having no charge against Christ, they give an evasive answer. They infer that our Lord was an evildoer,

without stating any facts. Just because they brought Him for trial, didn't make Him an evildoer. It is very easy for us, also, to be guilty of this: insinuation without foundation, to gain a point. There may also be the thought in their words: "Pilate, you know what wonderful people we are, and that we would never have brought Him here if He were not a criminal." We must be careful that we never do the same. In a discussion with someone we can say, or at least think: "After all, I'm the missionary, or the pastor, or the elder, or the deacon, or the Sunday School teacher, or whoever, and you know that /wouldn't say it if it were not true." Everything we say should be true, but it isn't true just because we say it. It has to be true in itself.

A Compromise

Pilate therefore said to them, "Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law" (v. 31).

Pilate wanted nothing to do with the case. This was a hasty, insincere attempt to set the Lord Jesus free. Pilate knew very well that Rome took from conquered peoples the right of capital punishment. He tried four expedencies to release our Lord:

1. He tried to make the Jews deal with the case themselves.
2. He sent Jesus to Herod to try Him (Luke 23:7).
3. He proposed to release the Lord Jesus in honor of the feast (John 18:39).
4. He scourged Jesus, hoping that the crowd would then let Him go (John 19:1).

“The Jews therefore said to him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death “ (v. 31)

They did not want a trial; they wanted a death sentence. It had all been pre-arranged in the illegal, night meeting of the Sanhedrin where “they all condemned Him to be guilty of death” (Mark 14:64).

Fulfillment of a Prophecy

“That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which He spoke, signifying what death He should die.” (v. 32)

This refers to the words of Jesus in John 12:32, 33: “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. This He said, signifying what death He should die.” He was lifted up from the earth on the cross, and He will draw all men to Him. This does not mean that in the end everybody will be saved. Universalism is not taught in the Bible. He did mean that because He was hung up on the cross, He is the inescapable Christ. He will draw all men to Him, either as Savior in this life, or as Judge in the life to come.

The insincere charge of the Jews against the Lord Jesus was that of blasphemy: “The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law He ought to die because He made Himself the Son of God” (John 19:7). The Jewish penalty for blasphemy was stoning: “He who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death; all the congregation of Israel shall certainly stone him” (Leviticus 24:16). But, the Lord Jesus cannot be stoned to death; He must be crucified. Thus it was prophesied, in Psalm 22. It has been said that this Psalm reads as though it had been written at the foot of the cross. It begins with the cry of our Lord from the cross:

“My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” and ends with: “He has done this.” This is the same as another cry from the cross: “It is finished.” In between, there are graphic descriptions of death by crucifixion (see verses 6 to 8 and 12 through 18). These inspired words of David were written one thousand years before Calvary. They were written, too, long before death by crucifixion had entered human history. It was Rome that invented this agony of execution.

Our Lord, Himself, had said: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up” (John 3:14). Even the type demands that the antitype be crucified. He also said: “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am” (John 8:28). At times, the Lord Jesus spoke even more clearly of His death by crucifixion, as in Matthew 20:18, 19; “Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the

Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him, and the third day He shall rise again.” What a detailed prophecy and exact fulfillment! The Jews could not judge Him according to their law, the Gentiles must by theirs. He cannot be stoned to death; He must be crucified, for “the Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). Pilate was not in charge at Gabbatha. God was in control. In every detail, Christ died for our sins “according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3).

Pilate Faces a Choice

“Then Pilate entered into the Judgment Hall again, and called Jesus, and said to Him, Are you the King of the Jews?” (v. 33)

There was no escape for Pilate, he had to try the case. They had accused Jesus: “We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that He, Himself, is Christ a King” (Luke 23:2). Little did they care about perverting the Roman nation, and not paying taxes to Caesar. They would have loved Christ if He had permitted them to make Him a king to free them from the hated Roman yoke. “When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force to make Him a king, He departed again to a mountain alone” (John 6:15). At this point in the trial of our Lord, there occurs the scene to which 1 Timothy 6:13 refers: “Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession.” The Lord Jesus no doubt was seeking the heart of Pilate when He asked him: “Are you saying this of yourself, or did others tell you about Me?” We might state it this way: “Pilate, do you really want to know about Me, yourself?” Our Lord is ever the seeking Savior, even when on trial before Pilate.

“Pilate answered, Am I a Jew?” (v. 35)

This is a stock, evasive answer. It is like saying: “I have my own religion.” Religion, outside of Christ, means nothing to God. It is often the greatest barrier to salvation.

“What have You done?” (v.35)

Pilate is all wrong. Our Lord is not there because of what He has done. He is enduring all of this because of

what you and I have done. God is laying on Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6).

“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world” (v. 36).

Jesus’ kingdom does not spring from, nor is it supported by the world. It is not advanced by worldly means. It is not earthly power, but spiritual power. It is not primarily buildings and equipment, though these are necessary, but it is the prayer meeting, holy living, soul winning, Christ honoring of a redeemed people. One day His kingdom will be on earth, but even then it will not be a worldly one. “But now is My kingdom not from here.” (v. 37).

What is Truth?

“Pilate therefore said to Him: Are you a king then?” (v. 37)

Pilate could not understand a king like the Lord Jesus, meekly standing there. “Jesus answered, You say 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 to the truth” (v.37). Jesus said that He is the King of a Kingdom of truth. “Pilate said to Him, What is truth?” (v.38).

Pilate told Jesus that He was a King without a kingdom. To cynical Pilate there is nothing right or wrong. There is nothing black or white. Everything is gray. This is the situation ethics of our day. “What is truth?” The primary reason for the terrible moral declension in countries like America is this very philosophy. The Bible, which used to be the standard, has been abandoned, and the culture slides. What a call this is to us believers to live the Truth!

Pilate shouted to the crowd: "I find in Him no fault at all" (v.38). We can understand that Pilate could find no fault in Him who was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). He did not sin (1 Peter 2:22). Pilate should have released Him, but he wanted the crowd's favor. He said: "You have a custom, that I should release someone to you at the Passover, Do you wish then that I release to you the King of the Jews?" (v.39).

The Jews Make a Choice

"Therefore they cried out saying, Not this Man, but Barabbas." (v.40).

Mark wrote of Barabbas: "He made insurrection" (Mark 15:7). It is amazing that they asked for the release of one who had committed the very crime they falsely accused Jesus of. They asked for Barabbas, which means "son of a father" and rejected Jesus, the Son of God. Dr. A.,T. Robertson, the great New Testament scholar writes: "They chose Barabbas in preference to Jesus and apparently Jesus died on the very cross planned for Barabbas." Do you think that Barabbas was there at the crucifixion? I do not believe he could have stayed away. He must have been somewhere on the outskirts of the crowd, muttering to himself: "The One in the middle is dying on the cross meant for me." We are all the Lord's Barabbases.

"Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2:24).

"Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3).

"He made Him Who knew no sin to be made sin for us" (2 Cor. 5:21).

Chapter 4 Behold The Man!

John 19:1-16

The Whipping Scene

This chapter begins with another miscarriage of justice. “Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him” (v. 1). Pilate had said to the crowd: “I have found no cause of death in Him” (v. 1). Pilate had said to the crowd: “I have found no cause of death in Him; I will therefore chastise Him and let Him go” (Luke 23:12). This is an amazing statement of contradiction. Imagine a judge proclaiming: “He is not guilty, therefore I will have Him beaten.” Pilate did not realize that it was prophesied concerning the Lord Jesus that He would give His back to the smiters (Isaiah 53:5). I read of a man who was meditating on this portion of the Bible before he retired for the night. He dreamed that he was present in Pilate’s judgment hall when the Lord Jesus was scourged. He could see Jesus, stripped to the waist, tied to a post, with His back bared to the soldier who was striking Him. The whip lashed out again and again stinging into the body of Jesus, and biting out pieces of flesh. The man could stand it no longer. Rushing up behind the soldier, he grasped him by the shoulders. The soldier turned, and the man looked into his own face. Yes, I scourged Him; you scourged Him. “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

The Sinister Mockery

“And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe, and said: Hail, King of the Jews!” (vs. 2,3).

Schilder writes that in the drama of our Lord’s passion, this is the soldier’s comedy scene. (Remember, this scene occurs after Jesus was scourged.) It was no joke for our Lord, but, things were pretty dull in Pilate’s barracks for the soldiers, and the word is passed around that they have a prisoner who thinks He is a king. He is a Jew, condemned to be crucified. He stands there among them, lacerated and dripping blood. But, this evokes no sympathy. Instead, they seem to say, “He is going to die anyway, so we may as well have some fun with Him. If He is a king, He needs a crown, a robe, and some subjects.” They crowned Him with thorns, put on Him a purple robe, and mocked Him, saying: “Hail, King of the Jews!”

In their fool mockery (“fools make a mock at sin.” Prov. 14:9) they unknowingly portray some of the eternal truths of the Gospel:

“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

He was clothed with a purple robe, for He is to be made sin for us.

“Cursed be the ground for your sake ... Thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to thee” (Genesis 3:17,18).

He was crowned with thorns, the emblem of the curse, for “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, being

made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one who hangs upon a tree" (Gal. 3:13).

He was clothed with a robe of contempt that we might receive a robe of righteousness. He was crowned with thorns that we might be crowned with blessing and glory. He was rejected as king of a spiritual kingdom that we might be kings and priests to God.

"and they smote Him with their hands" (v.3).

The sport became tame, and mockery passed into violence. Why? How can you explain this? He had not harmed them, nor anyone. In all the writings and philosophies of man you can find no explanation for their behavior. It is only in the Word of God that we learn why they acted so. The only explanation is that the carnal mind is enmity against God (Rom. 8:7), and the Lord Jesus is Immanuel, God with us; God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16).

"Ecce Homo!"

"Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, Behold the Man!" (v. 5)

This is the inspiration for the masterpiece, "Ecce Homo." No doubt, Pilate hoped to elicit sympathy. Looking at Him, battered and bleeding, they would surely say: "It is enough. Let Him go." It was a weak attempt to compromise between right and wrong, but compromise always leads to greater sin. It only increased the hatred it was meant to appease. Also, we cannot do evil that good may come. The end does not justify the means.

“When the chief priests therefore and officers saw Him, they cried out saying, Crucify! Crucify!” (v. 6)

“the chief priests” — Again, we see the worthlessness of religion which does not change the heart. As a ravening and roaring lion (Psalm 22:13), they had tasted blood. Their clamor had succeeded in making Pilate scourge an innocent Man. They hoped that by shouting louder they could make him crucify Jesus.

The Son of God

‘Pilate said to them, “Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him” ‘ (v. 6).

Pilate mocked them; he hated them; he feared them; he condemned himself. They answered him: “We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God” (v. 7). This was the only excuse the Jews could find for having our Lord crucified. One of the greatest proofs of the Deity of Christ is Mary, His mother, standing silent by the cross. She knew that this charge of the Jews had nailed Him there. If he were not the Son of God, all she had to do to have Him taken down from the cross was to say that it was not true, that He was not the Son of God, but had an earthly father. But, Mary stood silent at the foot of the cross, for she knew that the Holy Spirit had come upon her and the holy baby born of her was truly the Son of God (Luke 2:35). Would a mother silently permit her son to be executed for a charge which she with a word could prove was wrong, and thus save his life? Mary standing silent by the cross is an irrefutable witness to the Deity of Christ.

“When Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid; and went again into the judgment hall, and said to Jesus, Where are you from?” (v. 8,9)

Pilate did not ask Jesus who He was, but rather where He was from. He already knew where Jesus was from. He had learned that Jesus was a Galilean who belonged to Herod’s jurisdiction (Luke 23:6, 7). When the Jews charged that Jesus had made Himself the Son of God, Pilate became even more afraid, and was perhaps asking Himself: “Does this explain the conduct of this Man? Is He a deity from some other world?” At this point, the Lord Jesus gave him no answer (v. 9). Pilate no longer deserved an answer. Our Lord had patiently endured so much to give Pilate every opportunity to do what was right, but he would not.

No Reply

“Jesus gave him no answer” (v. 9).

Jesus was there for us. What excuse could He give for our sins. Therefore, “as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). He also fulfilled this prophetic type at two other times in His trial:

Before Caiaphas — “The high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Do you answer nothing? What it is which these witness against you? But He held His peace, and answered nothing” (Mark 14:60, 61).

Before Herod — “Then he questioned with Him in many words, but He answered him nothing” (Luke 23:9).

Pilate, the slave to public opinion, pitifully protested his power to crucify Jesus, or to release Him (v. 10). Jesus reminded Pilate that he could have no power against

Him except it were given him from above. “There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God” (Rom. 13:1). Pilate did not realize that the One to whom he boasted about power could have paralyzed his tongue.

Pilate Decides

Now, note some of the saddest words ever written: “From henceforth Pilate sought to release Him” (v. 12). Feel the agony of it! Why didn’t Pilate release our Lord? He couldn’t. His past sins would not let him perform a righteous act. The binding, paralyzing power of sin! “Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing” (Matt. 27:24). Poor Pilate! Sin makes us helpless. You must forsake sin, or it will master you, especially the sin of compromise.

The enemies of our Lord executed their final strategem: “The Jews cried out saying, If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar’s friend” (v. 12). Amicus Caesaris! They know their man. Self-love and self-interest, not justice, motivated him. Pilate had to decide between Christ and world position. Did he make a good choice? If the pit of hell could open up to let us hear the voice of Pilate, what a sermon he could preach! And, I am quite sure that I know his text: “What shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8:36, 37). What would you take that your soul should be eternally damned? Would you take a million dollars, or sinful pleasure, or the world’s applause, or power? Are any of these, or anything else keeping you from receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior? Pilate made a bad bargain.

Innocent?

“When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the Judgment Seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.” (v. 13)

It was at this point that Pilate “took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see you to it” (Matt. 27:24). Can water wash away sin? What can? We “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). We have to be cleansed from our sins to go to heaven, for no sin can enter there. What would we do if we did not have the blood of Jesus:

“In Whom we have redemption through

His blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14).

“You were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, ... but with the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18,19).

“Being now justified by

His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Rom. 5:9).

When we get to heaven and look around, the only ones that we will see there will be those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. It is the very One who was standing before Pilate who said: “This is My blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:28). Pilate took water to cleanse his sin, but rejected the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Pilate washed his hands when he should have exerted them. Merely to protest against wrong when you have the power to prevent it, is sin. "He who knows to do good, and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). "I am innocent, ... see you to it." You cannot get rid of sin by asking those for whom you did the wrong to be your sin bearers.

"He then delivered Him to them to be crucified" (v. 16).

Who delivered Him? "He was delivered for our offences" (Rom. 4:25). We delivered Him. The awfulness of our sins! "He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all" (Rom. 8:32). God delivered Him. The magnitude of His grace!

"And they took Jesus and led Him away" (v. 16).

The same word for "take" is also found in:

John 1:11 — "He came to his own, but His own did not take Him."

John 14:6 — "I will come and take you unto Myself."

This is only because He let them take Him and lead Him away to Golgotha.

Chapter 5 The Crucifixion

John 19:17-30

Trek to Golgotha

The heartbeat of the Gospel is at Calvary. With bowed hearts we now behold our Lord there. “And He bearing His cross went forth into a place called the place of a Skull, which is called in the Hebrew,

Golgotha” {v. 17). The Latin name for the worst of criminals was “cross bearer.” No Roman citizen could be crucified for any crime, no matter how heinous. It was such an ignominious way to die!

“He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8).

“Cursed is every one who hangs on a tree” (Gal. 3:13).

“bearing His cross” He is Abraham’s Greater Seed, the antitype of Isaac.

“Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it upon Isaac, his son” (Genesis 22:16). Weighed down by the cross, our Lord went forth to the Place of the Skull, the place of death. In Him is life (John 1:4) but He will die for us.

“Where they crucified Him” (v. 18).

There is just the simple statement. We must leave it to descriptions in Bible commentaries to portray His physical agonies. The Bible does not reveal these, except perhaps in the cry, “I thirst.” In harmony with this subdued tone of Scripture, I would merely state that death by crucifixion is agonizing, slow and extremely

painful. There was no merciful blow to a vital organ as the sufferer hung there.

“and two others with Him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst” (v. 18).

Again, the Scripture was fulfilled: “He was numbered with transgressors” Isaiah 53:12. This gave our Lord the opportunity to save the penitent thief who went from prison to Paradise the same day by the grace of the Savior. He represents the truth that the only way anyone can enter heaven is by grace through faith, and not by good works. He admitted that he was a sinner: “We receive the due reward of our deeds” (Luke 23:41). He called upon the Savior: “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom” (Luke 23:42). “And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto you, today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). This is because, “whoever will call upon the name of the Lord, will be saved” (Rom. 10:13).

The harmony between faith and works is expressed in the following verse:

“I could not work my soul to save;

This labor Christ has done.

But, I will work like any slave

For love of God’s dear Son.”

We do not work to get saved, but because we are saved.

The Central Cross

The three crosses on Golgotha herald their message through the ages. Over the one cross we could write the word, “reception;” and over the other, “rejection.”

Everyone in all of human history is represented by either the one or the other of these two crosses. There is only one central cross. Over this cross we write the word, “redemption.”

“and Jesus in the midst.” As in a great masterpiece where every detail makes prominent the central feature, so to onlookers at Golgotha, our Lord is the greatest criminal of the three. And in a sense this is true, for all sin was laid on Him. In the midst, He took the place of pre-eminent guilt. But, in the midst, He is central in all of God’s dealings with mankind. God does not come to man, nor can man come to God, except through the One in the midst. He is the “one God, and one mediator between God and men” (1 Tim. 2:5). He said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Me” (John 14:6). He did not say that He was a way among many, but that He is the only way. There are many religions in the world, but there is only one way to God.

He is in the midst of the golden lampstands, the local churches (Rev. 1:13). He must be central in everything in the local congregation. Every doctrine that we hold and which holds us, must be rooted in Him like spokes into the hub of a wheel. Our faith should be completely Christocentric. If this is not so, we become eccentric (off-centered) Christians. “In the midst” when even two or three believers gather together in His name, He is in the midst of them (Matt. 18:20).

King of the Jews

“And Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was, Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews” (v. 19).

Unknowingly, Pilate wrote words of evangelism. The repentant thief believed that He was a King, and that He was founding His kingdom while hanging on the cross. His kingdom was born from the blood of His cross. His bride (the church) was taken from His side, as Eve was taken from the side of Adam. Pilate wrote the truth, but he did not write enough. He is the King of kings, and the Lord of lords (Rev. 17:14).

“This title then read many of the Jews, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city” (v. 20).

Jerusalem was more crowded at the Passover than at any other time of the year. The Jews came from all over the Roman Empire to worship at the Feast. Christ did not die in a corner. His crucifixion was public at a time when multitudes thronged the city. We know more facts about the Lord Jesus Christ than we do about any other person in ancient history. Christianity is not the result of someone meditating somewhere and producing a book of a new religion. The Gospel is not man plastering his God on the sky. It is God coming down to earth in human history. The facts of our faith are historical; the interpretation of the facts is theological (God-logical).

“It was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin” (v. 20).

Hebrew (Aramaic) was the language of the Jews. Greek was the Gentile language, spoken throughout the entire Roman Empire. Jewish and Gentile tongues together accuse Him in His death. All the world crucified Him. But, God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever (Jew or Gentile) believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. Christ tasted death for every man (Heb.2:9).

Latin was the language of jurisprudence, the legal language. Golgotha was not primarily emotional, but judicial. It is true that our Lord's saving love melts our hearts. But, Golgotha was where the Lord Jesus bore the righteous judgment of God against sin. God now can justly declare the believing sinner forgiven. He does more than that. He declares him righteous. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19).

The Jews asked Pilate to change the writing on the cross (v. 21). He answered them: "What I have written I have written" (v. 22). Pilate became strong-willed, but it was too late.

The Robe

"Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments" (v. 23).

He probably was unclothed first and then His hands and feet were nailed to the cross. Adam was clothed by God (Genesis 3:21). The last Adam was unclothed by wicked men. He was unclothed that we might be clothed with the garments of salvation, and covered with the robe of His righteousness (Isaiah 61:10). Now, we are to put on the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 13:14).

The clothing of the one who was crucified became the property of those who did the crucifying. A little pile of clothing at the foot of His cross is the material legacy of our Lord. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). He is the Merchantman seeking

goodly pearls, who when He had found one pearl (the church, His bride) of great price, “sold all that He had and bought it” (Matt: 13:46).

“that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says, They parted My raiment among them, and for My vesture they did cast lots” (v. 24).

The seemingly contradictory prophecies of Psalm 22:18 were precisely fulfilled. One prophetic statement was that they would divide His clothing among themselves. On the other hand, it was written that they would gamble for His robe. “These things the soldiers did” (v. 24). Prophecy is history written beforehand in minute detail.

The Mournful Few

“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene” (v. 23).

The word “now” would be better translated as “but” to emphasize the contrast between the two groups standing at the foot of the cross: the soldiers, and the women and John. Of the second group, F.W. Krummacher writes so beautifully:

“In the midst of the rage and fury, love stands near Him in His dying moments and lifts up to Him its tearful and affectionate eye. Look at the little mournful group there, and behold a lovely little company in the midst of the bands of belial — a hidden rosebud under wild and tangled bramble bushes; a splendid wreath of lilies around the death bed of the redeemer.”

(The Suffering Saviour, Moody Press, page 369).

“Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.” (Song of Solomon 8:7).

His Compasson for Mary

“When Jesus therefore saw His Mother, and the disciple standing by whom He loved, He said to His mother, Woman, behold your son!” (v. 26)

From the pulpit of His cross, in the agony of His suffering, our Lord preaches to all ages a sermon on the fifth commandment: “Honor thy father and thy mother” (Exodus 20:12). Who can fathom the depths of His compassionate concern for His mother in that dark hour? It is interesting, though, that never in the Bible record did the Lord Jesus address Mary as His mother. We must honor Mary as the mother of His humanity, but not as the mother of God. How could she be? Through all the timeless past, He had existed in the Trinity, in His uncreated, eternal being. Mary’s Son is also Mary’s Lord. There are two erroneous attitudes that may be taken toward Mary: to place her upon an unscriptural pedestal, or to be ungrateful for her. Let us not be guilty of either. I am eager to meet Mary in heaven to thank her for willingly becoming the handmaid of the Lord, and for enduring the painful suspicion and misunderstanding from even her beloved Joseph who wanted to put her away. The stigma may have lasted throughout her lifetime from those who did not know the truth. One day they said to her Son: “We were not born of fornication” (John 8:41). I want to thank Mary also for her superlative testimony of submission: “Be it unto me according to your Word” (Luke 1:38). I want to thank her for standing by the cross of our Lord, when neither the hatred of the crowd nor the agony of the scene could

drive her away. She stood there as the sword pierced through her own soul also (Luke 2:35).

“Then He said to the disciple, Behold your mother! And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home” (v. 27).

In speaking thus is He telling Mary that her special relationship to Him is now over? Even before this, when someone said to Him: “Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You” (Matt. 12:47). He “stretched forth His hand toward His disciples, and said, Behold My mother and My brothers” (Matt. 12:49). Jesus belongs to all who do the will of God (Matt. 12:50) as much as He belongs to Mary. I would like to quote the pertinent words of Bishop Ryle:

“We surely need no stronger proof than we have here, that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was never meant to be honored as divine, or to be prayed to, worshipped and trusted in, as a friend and patroness of sinners. Common sense points out that she who needed the care and protection of another, was never likely to help men and women to heaven, or to be in any sense a mediator between God and man.”

{Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, John 10:10 to End, Zondervan Publishing House, page 552}.

Our Lord committed Mary to John's care, not John to Mary's.

“I Thirst!”

“After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled said, I thirst” (v. 28).

It was the fulfillment of Psalm 22:15, "My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue cleaves to My jaws." like one coming from a burning building, with tongue swollen and lips parched, He cried: "I thirst." In His infiniteness He had endured an eternity in hell during those three hours of darkness at Golgotha. He cried, "I thirst," that we never need to cry out in hell for water to cool our tongue, being tormented in the flame (Luke 16:24). Who could think of saving himself? The Lord Jesus must partake of the sufferings of the damned for us. There could be no other way.

In response to His cry, "they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to His mouth" (v. 29). This was in fulfillment of Psalm 69:21, "In My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink."

Done!

"When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished" (v. 30).

It was one word that He spoke: "Finished!" ("Done!" — "Completed!"). Anyone who wishes to work for his salvation is almost two thousand years too late. Like an added stroke on a perfect Rembrandt masterpiece, your touch would ruin it. All that you can do is to receive it. "The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom 6:23). If you feel that you could do one little thing to earn your salvation, you do not realize what a great salvation it is (Heb. 2:3).

"Finished" — the greatest word ever spoken in all of human history:

Suffering is ended. No enemy hand can touch him now.

Satan is vanquished, “that He might destroy the works of the devil” (John 3:8).

Sin is put away. “He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb. 9:26).

The law is fulfilled.. “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes”(Rom. 10:4).

Sacrifices are culminated. “Every priest stands daily ministering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He Had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God” (Heb. 10:11, 12).

Salvation is completed. “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes” (Rom. 1:16).

Death is conquered. “Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:54).

Eternal life is assured. “I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand” (John 10:28).

“and He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit” (v. 30).

He did that which no one else ever did, nor will ever do. He gave up His spirit. For all others, one day our souls will be required of us.

Three Crosses of Every Believer

This is the Savior’s Golgotha. On the believers’s Golgotha (Calvary) there are also three crosses:

1)

Crucified World. “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is

crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14). Two dead things have no attraction for each other. This is the believer’s

Gabbatha. The night before He died the Lord Jesus spoke to His men, in John chapter fifteen, concerning the believer’s relationship to the world:

Hated by the world (v. 18).

Because they are not of the world (v. 19).

They have been chosen out of the world (v. 19).

Therefore, they are persecuted by the world (v. 20).

But, they are to witness to the world (v. 27).

What is this worldliness that we are exhorted not to love (1 John 2:15)? Is it the beauties of nature? No. Is it people? No. God so loved the whole world of people that He gave His Son, and Jesus Christ makes you love everybody. What then, is the world? In 1 John 2:16 tells us all that is in the world is:

“The lust of the flesh.” — to live for the physical; a hedonistic philosophy of life.

“The lust of the eyes.” — to live for things; a materialistic philosophy of life.

“The pride of life.” — to live for self; an egotistical philosophy of life.

The body is very important and must be kept healthy and pure because it is God’s masterpiece of creation, the home of the soul, and the temple of the Holy Spirit for the believer. Possessions are necessary for us to function for God, for others, and for ourselves. Ambition is essential because our influence counts for God. But, God

was so good to warn us not to make these things our life, because “the world passes away and the lust thereof (1 John 2:17). I would not like to give my life for that which will not last, would you? One day, our Lord cried out: “Labor not for the meat which perishes” (John 6:27).

The lust of the flesh. The body will decay in the grave.

The lust of the eyes. Things will rust and rot.

The pride of life. We write our names upon the sand and the receding waves of time wash them away.

What I want to know is, what really matters when my heart throbs its last beat? What lasts then?

“Now abides faith, hope, and love” (1 Cor. 13:13). All that we do by faith, with hope toward Christ, and in love, will last.

“The Word of God which lives and abides forever” (1 Peter 1:23). Every minute you spend reading the Bible, memorizing the Bible, living the Bible, and witnessing the Bible, will last.

“You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain” (John 15:16). All the time you give to praying for the unsaved, giving out tracts, witnessing to souls, loving lost souls, inviting the unsaved to Gospel meetings, will last.

“To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven” (Heb. 12:23). The born-again Church of our Lord lasts forever. This eternal church is best portrayed on earth by the Bible-believing local church. All of your time spent in attending, assisting and advancing the local church, will last.

"If any man's work abide which he has built thereon, he shall receive a reward" (1 Cor. 3:14). All of our works, built upon the foundation, which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:12), will last.

"He who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:17). All that you do in the will of God, lasts forever. This means not only a saved soul, but also a saved life!

2)

Crucified Sin. "Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:11). The life principle of sin was broken at Calvary for the believer. "No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed remains in him" (1 John 3:9). That is the reason why we have victory over sinning: Christ, God's Seed, is in us. We overcome, because greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4). The One who is in you is greater than anyone or anything in the world that can tempt you. If you really want the Lord to do it, and if you will let Him, He will give you victory over temptation and sinning. There is no sinless perfection until we get to heaven, because the closer we get to the Light of the world the more imperfections we will see, but God expects us, and will enable us, to live without wilfully sinning against Him. We must not say that we are not able to sin, but that we are enabled not to sin. "Now unto Him Who is able to keep you from falling!" (Jude 24).

3)

Crucified Self. "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2:20). The cross is not an object of worship; it is an instrument of death. It is empty, not a crucifix, that we may place

ourselves upon it to be crucified with Christ. Sinners come to the cross to live, believers go to the cross to die. In fact, we have died, for “our old self was crucified with Him” (Rom. 6:6). There are two sides to Calvary: Christ died, and I died. There are two sides to sanctification: I died, and I live. In our spiritual experience, we must progress from Calvary to the Empty Tomb, to be risen with Christ. We were not only born crucified, we were also born resurrected. But, again, there can be no resurrection without death. Calvary comes before the Garden Tomb which is empty.

Chapter 6 The Garden Tomb

John 20:1-18

Heart of the Christian Faith

If the death of Jesus is the heart of our faith, the resurrection of Christ is the cornerstone of the Gospel. We read that the Lord Jesus Christ “was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:4). The resurrection was the central theme in the testimony of the early church. “With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 4:33). This foundational fact of our faith now engages our joyous contemplation. The walk from Gethsemane to Golgotha has been long and hard. Now, the weight is lifted and joy bursts the bands of sin and sorrow.

“The first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the sepulchre while it was still dark, and saw the stone taken away from the sepulchre” (v. 1).

The first day of the week, the Lord’s Day, is emblematic of the new creation. On this day, standing on redemption’s and resurrection’s ground, we especially gather to worship our Risen Lord in Spirit and in truth.

“Sorrow and love, are light sleepers” (Alexander Maclaren), so Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early while it was still dark. How many, especially women, like to go to a cemetery in the dark? I know that many do in the Philippines for the all-night vigil of the All Saints celebration. But, at that time the cemeteries are thronged with people and are ablaze with the light of

hundreds of candles. What made Mary come to the graveyard in the dark? Having been forgiven much, she loved much. "Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven demons" (Luke 8:2). Love drew her. Why is it that some believers do so little for their Savior? I believe it is primarily because of a low sense of indebtedness. When our sinful, lost condition is little felt, then little is done for the Lord. But if, by the Holy Spirit, we have been deeply convicted that without the Lord Jesus we would spend all eternity in hell, and that we are helpless to save ourselves, then we feel that we can never do enough for Him. A thousand lifetimes would be too few. His saving love propels us. That was Mary. And, great honor is reserved for great love for Christ:

Mary saw angels.

Mary talked with angels.

She was the first to see our Lord, risen from the dead.

She was the first to speak to Him.

She was the first one to hear His voice.

Mary was the first to tell the good news that He was alive.

She became an apostle to the apostles.

"and saw the stone taken away from the sepulchre." This had been the problem of the three women: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, as they sadly walked to the tomb. "And they said among themselves, Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" (Mark 16:3). How many times already our Lord has solved the problem that presses so heavily upon us. The stone was rolled away not to let Jesus out, but to let the witnesses look in.

The Empty Tomb

“so she ran” (v. 2).

Is she excited to tell the joyous news that the Lord is risen? No, she fears a grave robbery. There was no thought of a resurrection. It was the same with all of His disciples when Mary later, after seeing the Risen Lord, went and told them. “And they, when they heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not” (Mark 16:11). The unbelieving minds of the disciples were not fertile soil for the invention of a resurrection story.

“And came to Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved” (v. 2).

The beloved John was a brother born for adversity. He was staying with Peter who was crushed in heart because he had denied his Lord. He must have felt that he was no longer a disciple, because the heavenly messenger said: “Go your way, tell His disciples and Peter” (Mark 16:7). John didn’t forsake Peter in his time of need. And, a friend in need is a friend indeed. A true friend is one who knows all about you, and loves you just the same. You probably will have few such steadfast friends during your lifetime. They are golden. Do not lose them.

John does not name himself in the Gospel the Holy Spirit inspired him to write. He usually designates himself: “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” If you could have asked John: “What is the greatest fact in your life?” He may have answered: “That’s easy; I am the disciple that Jesus loves.” It was not so much his love for the Lord Jesus (we should never be ashamed to give this testimony), but it was Jesus’ love for him that thrilled and gripped his soul. He never got over the wonder of it — that the

great Lord of Glory should love him, an undeserving sinner. When all the disciples forsook the Lord Jesus and fled, the love of Christ brought John back to stand by the cross. Only Jesus' love will keep us true to Him. Every believer is the disciple whom Jesus loves, but only those who abide in Him live in the daily experiential realization of it. He never ceases to love us, but we can step outside His sheltering embrace. Yet, He still loved Peter at the enemies' fire as much as He loved John by the cross. The difference was that John ever lived in the actuality of the Savior's love.

"They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre" (v. 2).

How often we attribute to "they" what He has done. We often say: "What he did, or she did, or they did," when all the time the Lord is working on our behalf. If we could only be more like the beloved John who said: "It is the Lord" (John 21:7), and see Him in all the changing circumstances of life. Furthermore, how can they take away the

Lord?

"Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulcher. So they ran both together and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre" (v. 34).

I do not know if John were younger or Peter heavier, but John got to the tomb first. In keeping with his more reserved nature, "stooping down and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in" (v. 5). Then Peter came, perhaps huffing and puffing, and ran right into the tomb (v. 6). If John had been in his way, he probably would have knocked him over. John and

Peter are so different in character. When we are saved, we are not like a string of sanctified sausages out of a machine. In Christ, we still are gloriously different. God's garden of saints is a variegated delight. Please do not endeavor to press another believer into your personality mold, and don't try to make yourself into the fashion of another Christian. Learn from the good example of other believers (1 Cor. 11:1), but do not mimic them. Be your own best self for God. He wants you to be what He is making you.

"and he saw the linen clothes lying" (v. 6).

Much of the graphic vividness of this moving scene is depicted by three different words in the original language for seeing. In verse four, John stooping down and looking into the tomb saw the linen wrappings. This indicates a somewhat quick glance at them. Peter went into the tomb and saw the linen wrappings. The word "theory" is derived from this word. In order to truly propound a theory, he looked long at the linen wrappings, minutely examining them with his eyes. He saw them lying there, still in the form of our Lord, like a chrysalis from which the butterfly had emerged.

The myrrh which Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus bound together with the linen wrappings (John 19:39, 40) was a very sticky substance, like chewing gum. You will recall when Lazarus came forth from the grave "bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face bound about by a napkin" John 14:44. See him, shuffling forthwith muffled mutterings. Jesus had to say: "Loose him, and let him go" (John 11:44). When preparing a body for burial, the Jews wrapped each arm and hand, and leg and foot, and even each finger and toe,

individually. It would be impossible to unwrap anyone from the sticky grave clothes, and keep the wrappings in the shape of the body. Yet Peter saw them lying there in proper form but without the body of Jesus. The linen cloth which had been wrapped around the face of Jesus is carefully folded and lying in a place by itself (v. 7). All was in order. There was no disarray of robbery. We do not wonder that the angel invites: "Come see the place where the Lord lay" (Matt. 28:6). Alexander Maclaren aptly writes: "The emblems of death become the trophies of victory." Religions proudly revere tombs and relics. Christians point to a triumphant Christ who rose from the grave.

Those who will not believe in the resurrection have a problem with the empty tomb. They know that the body of Jesus was buried in the new rock sepulchre belonging to a man named Joseph who lived in Arimathaea, and who was rich. A great stone closed the entrance to the tomb which was sealed and guarded by Roman soldiers (Matt. 28:57-66). All of this is history. They know that on the third day the tomb was empty. How can you explain the empty tomb?

Theories about the empty tomb:

The first false theory is found in the Bible, itself. The chief priests gave large sums of money to the soldiers who were guarding the tomb to say that Jesus' disciples came by night, and stole Him away while they slept (Matt. 28:12, 13). Is it possible to believe that those terrified disciples, fearfully huddled in an upper room with the doors shut, would courageously go to the tomb, overwhelm the soldiers, break the seal of Rome to roll away the stone, and steal the body of Jesus? And, if they

did, how about the grave clothes lying there? Also, how does anyone know what has happened while he was asleep?

Another ingenious statement concerning the empty tomb is that the women, blinded by their tears, went to the wrong grave. The body of Jesus had been laid there just a few hours before and it would be amazing for the women to make such a mistake so soon after. It would almost seem that the Holy Spirit, anticipating such an error, carefully recorded: "Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus were looking on to see where He was laid" (Mark 15:47). Did Peter and John also run to the wrong place? And, how about the angels, did they make a mistake? Others have propounded that the Lord Jesus merely fainted on the cross and revived in the cool tomb. What about the spear-thrust of the soldier to make sure that He was dead? And, if our Lord had crawled out of the tomb, emaciated and weakened by His suffering, that would have been the end of Christianity. No one would have believed that such a One was the triumphant Lord of the church. In considering the false theories regarding the empty tomb, we agree with Alexander Maclaren: "It is easier to believe the miracle, than the impossible."

"Then went in also that other disciple, who came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed" (v. 8).

This is the third word for seeing, in this passage. When I explain something to the students at the Grace Christian High School, I may ask: "Do you see it?" I mean: "Do you perceive it? Do you get it?" This is the meaning of the word used here. Peter had more sight; John had more insight. Therefore, he "believed" (v. 8). What did he

believe? I feel that John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was the first one to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead.

“For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead” (v. 9).

A. T. Robertson writes that the Scripture probably was Psalm 16:10, “Thou wilt not leave My soul in Sheol; neither wilt thou allow Thy Holy One to see corruption.” On the Day of Pentecost, Peter knew this Scripture for he preached that in it David spoke beforehand of the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:31). Also, the Lord Jesus had said that like Jonah, He would be three days in the heart of the earth. Then, He came forth, as Jonah did. There is also the beautiful illustration of the two birds in Leviticus, chapter fourteen. One bird was killed, and the living bird was dipped in its blood and then loosed to fly away. It is a fitting picture of death and resurrection.

“Then the disciples went away to their own homes” (v. 10).

Like good practical men, they as much as said: “The tomb is empty. He is not here. We may as well go home.” So they did.

Mary’s Tears

“But Mary was standing outside the sepulchre weeping” (v. 11).

Now, we behold one of the most appealing scenes in all of the Bible. What a picture it is! We see Mary alone, Mary with the angels, and Mary with the Risen Lord. Women seem to have a sixth sense. At least, Mary wasn’t satisfied. She was not ready to go home, so she stands there weeping. Bishop Ryle remarks: “The head of a

woman is generally weaker than that of a man, but the affections are stronger." Mary's tears manifested her affection, but they also showed her unbelief. Ladies, even your tears must be regulated by the Word of God.

"She stooped down and looked into the sepulchre" (v. 11).

"Looked," is the word for "glanced." But, notice verse twelve: "And saw two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain" (v. 12). This word for "saw" is that long examining look of Peter. Can't you see Mary glance into the open tomb, and then snap into a penetrating concentration at the sight of the angels? They were dressed in white — heaven's color of purity. They were sitting. It is the only time in Scripture that I know of angels sitting. "Sitting" means "finished." "The one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." Again, I quote the apt statement of Alexander Maclaren: "In the spiritual realm there is no rivalry. There are both head and feet angels." We, too, must take our place in His will, either as head or as feet servants, as those in the prominent place or those in humble ministries.

"They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" ' (v. 13).

The angels must often wonder at our tears. Mary was weeping over the very fact which should have made her rejoice. If Jesus' body were there, she should have howled in anguish. The tears and anxieties of believers sometimes are needless. They are often for reasons which should cause us joy. But, I love Mary's answer: "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not

know where they have laid Him" (v. 13). To Mary, the Lord Jesus is dead and buried, yet He is still her Lord. Risen and triumphant, is He yours?

The Risen Lord

"When she had said this, she turned around, and beheld Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus" (v. 14).

Did Mary hear a slight movement, or was it that sixth sense again, feeling that someone was behind her? At least she turned around from the tomb. She also turned away from angels. If I ever saw an angel my gaze would be transfixed, oblivious of all else. But, Mary was seeking her Lord, and even angels could not satisfy her. If there is anything from which we cannot turn away to fully follow our Lord, it means that we love it more than we love Him. If we truly love Him we will turn away from everything which impedes. When I first arrived in the Philippines in 1946, I asked a veteran missionary, Rev. Edward Bomm of the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism: "Why haven't more missionaries come to the Philippines?" He replied: "It is because many are not willing to turn away from ties of home." I know it hurts, but you will do it when Christ calls if your love for Him is supreme.

'Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?"' (v. 15).

These are His first recorded words after He rose from the dead. It is the very same Jesus who came to bind up the brokenhearted. He is the answer to all of your tears.

"Whom are you seeking?" (v. 15).

It was a loving question, precursor to the revealing of His identity. It also may have been a gentle rebuke: “Mary, think. Who is it whom you are seeking? The One whom you seek is the Resurrection and the Life. Why do you seek the Living among the dead?” But, again, I like her answer: “If you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away” (v. 15). Did you ever pick up a little boy who had fainted? He feels like he had rocks in his pockets. The Lord Jesus was a strong man in His perfect humanity, but Mary said that if she could find Him, she would lift Him up and carry Him away. Love never measures its strength, but love always gets the job done. For, love never fails.

Like someone with a wonderful secret that can no longer be contained, ‘Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said unto Him in Hebrew, “Rabboni,” (which means, Teacher.)’ (v. 16). “Woman” (v. 15), evoked no recognition. “Mary,” did. He calls His own sheep by name (John 10:3), and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice (John 10:4). Christian, are you still closely following Him, or have other siren calls enticed you? “A stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers” (John 10:5). Before reading further, get away somewhere and again listen to His call, perhaps to his recommissioning.

“Oh, I love to hear His voice

Saying, You belong to Me.

You are not your own; with a price you’re bought,

And you’re Mine, eternally.

And, I love to hear Him say,

I have saved you by My grace.

And, when we get to glory it will then be grander still,
For I shall see His face.'

'Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to Me" ' (v. 17).

The old relationship of sight, sound, and touch no longer exists. "I ascend to My Father" (v. 17). Mary now is to walk with her Lord, by faith and not by sight. And we, too. "Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer" (2 Cor. 5:16).

Images, pictures, processions are to bring Him down to earth; He wishes to lift us up to the heavenlies. Beware of fleshly carnality in spiritual matters.

"Stop clinging to Me." Was it not also an exhortation to Mary emphasizing that He was not her own personal property? "Go to My brethren" (v. 17). Spiritual blessings are to be shared, not selfishly enjoyed. She accepted the loving admonition. 'Mary came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord" ' (v. 18).

Rise with Christ!

This is the Lord's resurrection morning. The believer, also, is to be risen with Christ. In fact, God already has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6). When we were born again, we were born resurrected. The Apostle Paul prayed for the believers at Ephesus that they might know (appropriate) in daily experience the power which God wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead" (Eph. 1:20). The resurrection life is simply, "Not I, but Christ" (Eph. 2:20) in practical reality. Colossians,

chapter three, is the statement of the believer's resurrected life in Christ. Since we are risen with Christ:

1. Put to death: Immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (v. 5).
2. Put off: Anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive speech, lying, and evil practices (vs. 8, 9).
3. Put on: A heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, bearing with one another, forgiving each other, and love (vs. 12-15).
4. Let in: The peace of Christ, and the word of Christ (vs. 16, 16).
5. Let out: Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs, doing all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him (vs. 16, 17).
6. Look up: For the reward of the inheritance (v. 24).

This is a Scriptural delineation of the characteristics of the resurrected life in Christ.

Chapter 7 The Risen Lord

John 21:1-25

Galilee, the Discipleship Center

Strong associations clustered around the Sea of Galilee for Jesus and His disciples. It was while walking along its shores that he called Peter and Andrew, James and John to become fishers of men (Mark 1:16-20). In the fierce gale of wind as the waves were beating into their boat the disciples awakened Him, and they feared exceedingly to behold the Sea become perfectly calm at His: "Peace, be still!" (Mark 4:37-41). Sitting in a little boat on the Sea, He spoke to the multitude on the shore the matchless parables of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew, chapter 13). His disciples thought that He was a ghost when He came walking on the Sea in a storm (Matt. 14:25, 26). But now, risen from the dead, He meets them there on the seashore. This may be the most meaningful of all. We approach this chapter of the Word of God with reverent and expectant hearts.

"After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias and in this way He manifested Himself" (v. 1).

The Sea of Tiberias is the Sea of Galilee, "after these things Jesus went over the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias" (John 6:1). Regarding the meaning and message of this chapter, the following explanation by G. Campbell Morgan is very helpful:

"Notice carefully the wording: After these things Jesus manifested Himself. The voice of the verb is active,

showing that it was a manifestation of intention and purpose in the mind of Jesus. The story is full of pictorial beauty. Let us imagine ourselves there, at the Sea of Galilee, with which these fishers were so wonderfully familiar: on the shores of which they lived for the prosecution of their old calling of fisherfolk. As we do, we notice how John tells that story. He says Jesus manifested Himself. The Greek word here means to shine forth. That is, Jesus made Himself to shine forth upon them in certain ways. Whatever we have in the chapter is something which Jesus particularly intended that little group to see. He manifested

Himself. And again the statement is made that, He manifested Himself on this wise. Twice over the same word, manifested, shined forth, revealed. What? Himself. That is the key to everything in the chapter.”

(The Gospel According to John, Fleming H. Revell Company, pages 324, 325.)

What Jesus Wants for You:

He not only appeared to them, physically, but He also revealed His heart to them. At no other time is the loving heart of our Lord laid bare more than here. He manifests what He, the triumphant Lord of glory, wants to be and do for us, and what He wants us to do and be for Him. Could anything be more appealing to the spiritual heart? They are simple, but basic things.

(1)

He wants to share in our burdens and problems. “Then Jesus said to them, Children have you any meat?” (v. 5). He was genuinely concerned that they had toiled all through the night and had caught nothing. Our Lord is

concerned about everything that concerns us, even our failures. There is nothing in our lives too great for His power, and nothing too small for His love. "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). Literally, it reads: "Throwing all your anxiety on Him, because it matters to Him about you."

"Children, you do not have any fish, do you?" He also may have asked this question to gently rebuke what apparently was their labor in self-will. "Peter said to them, I go a fishing. They said to him, We also go with you. They went forth and entered into a ship immediately, and that night they caught nothing" (v. 3). This is service in the energy of the flesh: I go; we go; zero. He may have been emphasizing this fruitlessness with His question. There is nothing wrong with fishing, but I believe that Peter's restlessness drove him to his old vocation from which the Lord had called him. Waiting is often the hardest task for the believer, especially the Peter personality.

(2)

He wants us to be honest with Him. "They answered Him, No" (v. 5). It is very hard for a fisherman to admit that he caught nothing. In our dealings with our Lord, there must be confession of failure, if we have failed, before He can bring His supplies. We must know our weakness before He gives His strength. He wants us to learn that we are entirely dependent upon Him. He did not say: "Without Me, you will accomplish very little" but "Without Me you can do nothing"(John 15:5).

If our Christian life and experience is not quite what we expected it to be, and we are disappointed and discouraged, we must not go to Him, saying: "Praise the

Lord! All is fine. Hallelujah!” If we draw near with our lips, and not from our hearts, He cannot help us. But if we are honest with Him in prayer, He can place His finger on the problem and correct our service.

(3)

He wants to direct our service. “And He said to them, Cast the net on the right side of the boat” (v. 6). “In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths” (Prov. 3:6). He has promised to instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go, and to guide you with His eye (Psalm 32:8). To be guided by His eye, you must intently fix your gaze on Him. A simple, effective life-text is: “Looking unto Jesus” (Heb. 12:2).

God guides us by His Word. “Your Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105). Our constant attitude and prayer should be: “Order my steps in Your Word” (Psalm 119:133). Usually, our decisions are guided by the general principles of the Word of God as our minds and hearts are saturated with its truths. Sometimes, there is specific leading through a verse or portion of Scripture, in context, in our daily Bible reading. If we wish to be guided by the Lord, we must be daily and obediently reading the Word of God. Then, we pray for guidance, “Show me Thy ways, O Lord; teach me Thy paths. Lead me in Thy truth” (Psalm 25:4, 5). To these two basic means of guidance, the Lord adds other factors of His leading as He sees them to be pertinent to the situation: a sermon, a spiritual song, advice of Christian friends, circumstances, etc. “He leadeth me” (Psalm 23:2). As already noted, sometimes the Lord has to correct us in order to guide us. “Cast the

net on the right side.” We must be willing to accept and to obey His correction.

(4)

He wants to crown our service with success. “and you shall find” (v. 6). “They were not able to draw for the multitude of fish” (v. 6). I can see the disciples counting them: “One hundred fifty-one, one hundred fifty-two, one hundred fifty-three!” (v. 11). The verse tells us that they were big fish, too. He knows where the fish are. Each day we should ask Him to lead us to the prepared and needy hearts He wants us to contact for Him. I often fail in this.

(5)

He wants us to obey Him. “they cast therefore” (v. 6). They could have answered the Stranger on the shore, “We have spent our lives as fishermen. We know how to fish. We don’t need you to tell us.” They might have replied that the right side of the boat was the wrong side over which to cast because they hauled in the net with the right hands. They could have said that you don’t fish in the Sea of Galilee in the daylight, for even a shadow on the clear water or the least movement frightens the fish away. But, they did not argue; they obeyed. He wants us to obey and He will do the rest. Sometimes, we must obey when we cannot understand His leading, or even when it seems contrary to our judgment. Mostly though, our minds and hearts, the Word of God, and circumstances harmonize in His leading. He wants us to obey and He will do the rest, in and through us. This is glorious, isn’t it?

(6)

He wants us to catch fish. "Jesus said unto them, Bring of the fish which you have now caught" (v. 10). There are many kinds of disciples, but all are to be fishermen.

1. John, with the spiritual eye. "It is the Lord" (v. 7).
2. Peter, with the active zeal. "Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea" (v. 7).
3. Just plain rowers. "But the other disciples came in the little boat ... dragging the net full of fish" (v. 10).

For every leader, like John and Peter, we need many more rowers in the local church, who are: "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). Pastors come and go, problems are always present (where there are people there will be problems. If you want no problems, you will have to resign from the human race), but the rowers keep steadily in their place, doing their job of bringing the fish to shore. It is hard, unappreciated work, but thank the Lord for the rowers! It is even said of the great Apostle Paul and Barnabas that they were brought on their way by the church (Acts 15:3). That's the rowers, quietly and consistently helping the saints along the way in the Lord.

Disciples are so different in their service, but all are to be soul-winners: "Bring the fish." Jesus says to all believers: "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). For the building up of the body of Christ, for the work of the ministry, "He gave some, apostles and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:11). But, it does not read that He called some to be witnesses, soul-winners.

“Bring of the fish which you have now caught.” Who really caught those fish? All night they were not able to catch anything. We obey, He does the work through us, and gives us the reward. This is grace upon grace. And, the fish that He and we catch, refresh both Him and us.

“Bring of the fish which you have now caught.” Let us not always give Him sun-dried, preserved tuyo (Philippine salted fish), or keep reaching down into the salt mackerel barrel. He likes some fresh fish. Never cease to thank Him for saving you perhaps years ago, and for all that He has meant to you through the years. But how is He wonderfully new and fresh to you today? That means most to Him.

(7)

He want us to have food to eat. “As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread” (v. 9). Is it possible that the Eternal Lord of Glory is concerned that we have food to eat? Surely, this is one of the most touching scenes in Scripture. Nail-pierced hands of Omnipotence had prepared a breakfast of broiled fish and toast for His hungry men. He lays bare His heart to reveal that God wants to supply all of your need out of His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19).

(8)

He wants our fellowship, “Jesus said to them, Come and dine” (v. 12). In Palestine, as in the Philippines, to eat together is to fellowship one with another. There was a little girl who was daddy’s girl. When Dad was under the car, there would be two little feminine feet sticking out as she handed him the wrench and the pliers. When he came home from work she would run to meet him, leap

up into his arms, and hug him tightly. Right after the evening meal was their special hour to romp and play, to mend her doll, to tell him all that happened that day, to read her a story. (God help the children whose parents have no time for the children's hour.) One evening, right after dinner, she said: "Please excuse me, Daddy, I would like to go to my bedroom." That was alright. But, it happened the next evening, the next, and the next. Poor Daddy! He said to his wife: "What has happened to my little girl? We don't have our time together every evening anymore. I miss her so much." (God help the parents whose children take no time to be with them.) Then, Christmas came. Under the tree, all prettily wrapped, was a gift with the childish scrawl: "To the dearest Daddy in all the world!" Opening it, he saw a pair of knitted slippers. Now he knew why she rushed into her room every evening after dinner. He lifted her up, hugged her close, and said: "Oh, I love your gift so very much. And, you made it with your own little hands. But, listen, my dear, I must tell you something: I want your presence more than your presents." You mean more to Him than even your fruitful service, important and vital as it is. He wants a bride more than a servant, though He wants both. Does He have your fellowship, especially in the daily quiet time? Then, do you walk with Him all day long?

(9)

He wants our love. "So when they had dined, Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me more than these? He said to Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love You" (v. 15). There are two words for love in this verse. In his

Word Pictures in the New Testament, A.T. Robertson states: "Peter makes no claim here to superior love and passes by the 'more than these,' and does not even use Christ's word agapao for high and devoted love, but the humbler word, phileo for love of a friend."

"He said to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, do you love (agapao) Me? He said unto Him, Yes, Lord, You know that I love (philo) You" (v. 16). The Lord Jesus no longer adds the "more than these" knowing that Peter has learned his lesson. 'He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love (phileis) Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love (phileis) Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love (philo) You" ' (v. 17). A.T. Robertson again comments:

"This time Jesus picks up the word phileo used by Peter and challenges that. These words are often interchanged in the New Testament, but here the distinction is preserved. Peter was cut to the heart."

Peter was grieved, not because the Lord Jesus asked him three times: "Do you love Me?", but because the third time He had to come down to Peter's lower expression of love. Peter is still honest and answers: "You know that I love (philo) You." He does not boast of an agapao love. Peter had now learned the lesson of humility so he later exhorts us: "Be clothed with humility" (1 Peter 5:5).

The Lord Jesus received Peter's lesser love and for the third time Peter was recommissioned: "Feed My sheep" (v. 17). See, "Feed My lambs" (v. 15), and "Feed My sheep" (v. 16). It may be that the threefold restoration also related to Peter's threefold denial. At the world's fire Peter denied his Lord three times. At the

Savior's fire he was recommissioned three times. "He restores my soul" (Psalm 23:3).

How much have you ever done just because you love the Lord Jesus, and not for any other satisfaction or commendation? None of us loves Him as we feel we should, but be honest like Peter and give Him the love you can. Let us not pretend love. He knows whether we love (agapao) Him, or if we (phileo) Him.

"You know that I love you." He accepts our imperfect love and ever seeks to refine it. The question is: Do you love Him a little more today than you did yesterday? If you fellowship with Him daily in His Word and if you see Him in all of life's experiences, you will.

There was a lovely teenage girl who was so Christlike. She wore a heart-shaped locket suspended on a fine gold chain about her neck. She never let anyone look into it. When she contracted a terminal illness, she told her mother: "When I go home to be with the Lord, you may open the locket." When she gently stopped breathing, her mother leaned over her silent form and with trembling hands opened the locket. There was no picture there, but only these words: "Whom having not seen, I love. 1 Peter 1:8." She was in love with the Lover of her soul. That was the secret of her Christlike life. It is noteworthy that in 1 Peter 1:8, Peter now uses the word

"agapao" to express the deepest love.

(10)

He wants us to follow Him. "And when He had spoken this, He said to him, Follow Me" (v. 19). I cannot understand why He, the Lord of glory, would want us to

follow Him. He could have saved us and then left us alone to take us to heaven when we die. That would be all of grace. But, He not only saves us, He empowers us, He leads us, He walks with us. He wants us. That is grace upon grace. "Follow Me" means: "I will guide; I will provide; you must love Me; you must obey Me." On October 26, 1958, a passenger ship sailing between Manila and Cebu, the second largest city in the Philippines, caught fire and sank. The next morning, the Manila Daily Bulletin carried an account of the holocaust. The closing paragraph read:

"The only happy note in the nightmarish event was that of a pretty nineteen year old woman who was saved by a bachelor. When they reached the safety of Santa Fe, the woman gratefully said:

You saved my life; I am yours, I will follow you wherever you will take me. The man indeed took her with him, and they presumably lived happily after the tragedy."

"I was sinking deep in sin,
Far from the peaceful shore.
Very deeply stained within,
Sinking to rise no more.
But, the Master of the sea
Heard my despairing cry;
From the waters lifted me
Now, safe am I." — James Rowe

And, by His grace, I would like to follow Him all the days of my life.

At Galilee, our Lord laid bare His loving heart to His disciples:

He wants to share in our burdens and problems.

He wants us to be honest with Him.

He wants to direct our service.

He wants to crown our service with success.

He wants us to obey Him.

He wants us to catch fish.

He wants us to have food to eat.

He wants our fellowship.

He wants our love.

He wants us to follow Him.

In our experience, we also are to go to Galilee, to manifest the Savior. "That you should show forth the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). He is the image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15). He made the invisible God, visible. Now, we are to make the invisible Christ visible. This is the believer's Galilee — Manifesting the Savior.