

CHRIST'S LONELINESS AND OURS

NO. 3052

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“Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.”
John 16:31-32

[Another sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #2271, Alone, Yet Not Alone]

“Do ye now believe?” Then it seems that faith held them fast to Christ, but as soon as fear prevailed, they were scattered and left their Master alone. Faith has an attracting and upholding power. It is the root of constancy and the source of perseverance, under the power of God’s Spirit. While we believe, we remain faithful to our Lord. When we are unbelieving, we are scattered, “every man to his own.” While we trust, we follow closely. When we give way to fear, we ungratefully forsake our Lord.

May the Holy Spirit maintain our faith in full vigor that it may nourish all our other graces! Faith being strong, no faculty of the inner man will languish, but if faith declines, the energy of our spiritual nature speedily decays. If you believe not, you shall not be established, but “the just shall live by faith” to the fullest force of life.

This being noted, our meditation shall now be fixed alone upon the Savior’s loneliness and the measure in which the believer is brought into the same condition.

I. THE LONELINESS OF THE SAVIOR.

Note *the fact of it*. He was left alone—alone just when most, as man, He needed human sympathy. Solitude to Him, during His earthly life, was often the cause of strength. He was strong in public ministry because of the hours spent in secret wrestling with God on the lone mountainside. But when He came to the hour of His agony, His perfect humanity pined after human sympathy, yet it was denied Him.

He was alone in the garden of Gethsemane. Though He took the eleven with Him, yet must He leave eight of them outside at the garden gate—and the three, the choice, the *élite* of them all—though they were brought somewhat nearer to the scene of His passion, yet even they must remain at a stone’s cast distance.

None could enter into the inner circle of His sufferings, where the furnace was heated seven times hotter than it was wont to be heated. In the bloody sweat and the agony of Gethsemane, the Savior trod the winepress alone. [See sermon #2567, The Single-Handed Conquest] His specially-favored disciples might have watched with Him, wept with Him, and prayed for Him—but they did not. They left His lone prayer to ascend to heaven unattended by sympathetic cries.

He was alone, too, when put upon His trial. False witnesses were found to bear lying testimony against Him, but no man stood forward to attest the honesty, quietness, and goodness of His life. Surely one of the many who had been healed by Him, or of the crowds that had been fed by His bountiful hand, or likelier still, some of those who had received the pardon of their sins and enlightenment of their minds by His teaching might have come forward to defend Him.

But no, His coward followers are silent when their Lord is slandered. “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter,” but no pitying voice entreats that He may be delivered. True, His judge’s wife tries to

persuade her husband to have nothing to do with Him, and her vacillating husband offers to liberate Him if the mob will have it so—but none will raise the shout of “loose Him and let Him go.”

He was not literally alone upon the cross, yet He was really so, in a deep spiritual sense. Though a few loving ones gathered at the foot of the cross, yet these could offer Him no assistance and probably dared not utter more than a tearful protest. Perhaps the boldest there was that dying thief [See sermon #1881, *The Dying Thief in a New Light*] who called Him “Lord,” and expostulated with his brother-malefactor, saying, “This man hath done nothing amiss.”

Few indeed were the voices that were lifted up on behalf of the Man of Sorrows. From the time when He bowed in agony amid the deep shades of the Mount of Olives, till the moment when He entered the thicker darkness of the valley of death-shade, He was left to suffer alone.

Here was the fact, what was *the reason for it*? We conclude that fear overcame the hearts of His disciples. It is natural that men should care for their lives, but these men pushed this instinct of self-preservation beyond its legitimate sphere. And when they found that the Master was taken and that probably the disciples might share His fate, they each one, in the panic of the moment, fled in haste.

They were not all traitors, but they were all cowards for the time being. They meant not to desert their Lord—they even scorned the thought when it was put to them in calmer moments—but they were taken by surprise, and like a flock of sheep, they fled from the wolf. They rallied after a little and mustered courage enough to follow Him from afar off. They did not quite forget Him—they watched Him to His latter end, they kept together after He was dead—they united to bury Him and they came together instinctively on the first day of the week.

They had not altogether cast off their loyalty to their Lord and Master, for He was still keeping those whom the Father had given Him that none of them might be lost—yet fear had, for awhile, defeated their faith and they had left Him alone.

There was a deeper reason, however, for the Savior's loneliness. It was a condition of His sufferings that He should be forsaken. Desertion was a necessary ingredient in that cup of vicarious suffering which He had covenanted to drink for us. We deserved to be forsaken and therefore He must be. Since our sins against man, as well as our sins against God, deserved that we should be forsaken of men, He, bearing our sins against God and man, is forsaken.

It cannot be that a sinner should enjoy true friendship. Sin is a separating thing, and so, when Christ is made the Sin-Bearer, His friends must leave Him. Besides, this was one jewel in the crown of His glory. It was said, in triumph, by the great hero of old, who typified our Lord, “I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me.” To make that true in the severest sense, it was needful that the Captain of our salvation should, by His single arm, defeat the whole of hell's battalions. His are the sole laurels of the war, for “his right hand, and his holy arm, have gotten him the victory.”

Can you, for a moment, enter into *the sorrow of that loneliness*? There are men to whom it is a small matter to be friendless. Their coarse minds scorn the gentle joys of fellowship. Sterner virtues may tread beneath their iron heel the sweet flowers of friendship, and men may be so defiantly self-reliant that, like lions, they are most at home amid congenial solitudes. Sympathy they scorn as womanish and fellowship as a superfluity.

But our Savior was not like them—He was too perfect a man to become isolated and misanthropical. His grand gentle nature was full of sympathy towards others and therefore sought it in return. You hear the voice of grief at the loss of brotherly sympathy in the mournful accents of that gentle rebuke, “What, could ye not watch with me one hour?”

How could they sleep while He must sweat? How could they repose while His soul was “exceeding sorrowful, even unto death”? He showed the greatness of His soul, even in its depression, when He lovingly excused them by saying, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

How sad to Him it was that they should desert Him! The brave Peter and all the rest of them, all taking to their heels. Worse still was it to receive the traitor's kiss with the word, “Hail, Master,” as the

son of perdition betrayed his Friend to win the blood-money! David lamented the villainy of Ahithophel, but the Savior, inasmuch as He was of a more tender spirit than the son of Jesse, even more keenly felt the treachery of Judas.

For Peter to say that he knew Him not, and with cursing and swearing to deny Him three times in succession, was terribly cruel. There was such an element of deliberation about that denial that it must have cut the Savior to the very quick.

But where was John—John who leaned on His bosom—“that disciple whom Jesus loved”—where was John? Did not he say a word, nor even interject a single syllable for his dear Friend? Has Jonathan forgotten his David? The Master might have said to John, “Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women,” but alas! John is gone with the rest. He has nothing to say for his Master! Though he remains at the cross’ foot to the last, yet even he cannot defend Him. Jesus is all alone—all alone, and the sorrow of His lonely heart none of us can fully fathom.

This is a painful meditation and therefore, let us notice *the result of our Savior’s loneliness*. Did it destroy Him? Did it overwhelm Him? It pained Him, but it did not dismay Him. “Ye shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone,” says He, “because the Father is with me.” The effect of that solace in His soul was wonderful.

Our Savior did not turn aside from the purpose of redeeming His people, though they proved so unworthy of being redeemed. Might He not well have said, “You have forsaken Me, so I will forsake you”? It would have seemed but natural for Him to have exclaimed, “You are types of all My people, you care little enough for Me. I have come into this world to save you, but you do not try to rescue Me. You have deserted Me, so I leave you to your fate.”

But no, “having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” And although they forsook Him, yet He fulfilled to each one of them His ancient promise, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” The baptism wherewith He was to be baptized He would still accomplish and be immersed in the floods of death for their sake.

Nor did He merely exhibit constancy to His purpose. He displayed great courageousness of spirit. He was all alone, but yet how peaceful He was! The calmness of the Savior is wonderful. When He was brought before Herod, He would not utter one hasty or complaining word. His perfect silence was the fittest eloquence and therefore He was majestically mute.

Before Pilate, until it was needful for Him to speak, not a syllable could be extorted from Him. All along, in patience He possessed His soul. In the garden and afterwards, He was quiet as a lamb, surrendering Himself to the sacrifice without a struggle. His solemn, deliberate self-surrender, in His loneliness, has an awfulness of love in it—fitter for thought than words. His brave spirit was not to be cowed, though it stood at bay alone and all the dogs of hell raged around Him.

Mark, too, not only the constancy and the courageousness of our Savior, but His matchless unselfishness, for while His disciples forsook Him and fled, He forgave them in His inmost heart and cherished no resentment against them. When He rose again, His conduct to these runaways was that of a loving shepherd or a tender friend—He fully forgave them all. If He did mention it, it was only in that gentle way in which He inquired of Peter, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?”—reminding him of his failure, for his lasting improvement and benefit—and giving him an honorable commission as the token that it was all condoned.

Inquire awhile *the reason for this result*. Why was it that our Savior, in His loneliness, thus stood so constant, and courageous, and forgiving? Was it not because He fell back into the arms of His Father when He was forsaken by His friends? It was even so—“*The Father is with me.*” Look carefully at that word. As the Savior uttered it, it was true that the Father’s presence was with Him, but I beg you to remember that it was not true, in every sense, all the way through His passion.

The Father was not with Him on the cross in the sense of manifested personal favor. His cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” [See sermon #2133, “Lama Sabachthani?”] shows that our Savior

did not, at that time, derive comfort from any present revelation of the love of God to Him as man. The conscious presence and display of love were taken away.

There is, therefore, another meaning in these words, "Because the Father is with me," and surely it is this—*the Father was always with Him in His design*. The enterprise He had undertaken was the salvation of His people—and the Father was wholly and ever with Him in that respect. In that sense, He was with Him even where He deserted Him—it was but a form of the Father's being with Christ that He should be forsaken of God.

I am not quite stating a paradox, and if it should sound like one to any here, let me expound it. It was in pursuance of their united great design that the Father forsook the Son. Both were resolved upon the same gracious purpose, and therefore the Father must forsake the Son, that the Son's purpose and the Father's purpose in our redemption might be achieved. He was with Him when He forsook Him—with Him in design when He was not with Him in the smiles of His face.

Furthermore, *the Father was always with our Lord in His co-working*. When Jesus was in Gethsemane, and the staves and lanterns were being prepared, the God of providence was permitting or arranging all. When Jesus was taken before Caiaphas, and Herod, and Pilate, and Annas, God was allowing all things to be done—the Father was with Christ fulfilling the prophecies, answering the types, and accomplishing their covenant engagements.

Through the whole sad chapter it might be said, "My Father worketh hitherto." Even amid the thick darkness and the dire suffering of Christ, the Father was with Christ, working those very sufferings in Him, for "it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." Into this fact Christ sinks as into a sea of comfort—"The Father is with me." "It is enough," says He, "My own chosen friends forsake Me and My dearest earthly friends leave me, those whom I have purchased with My blood deny Me, but My Father is with me." By a matchless exercise of faith, our Redeemer realized this, and was sustained even in that dread hour.

II. We shall make practical use of our subject by considering THE CHRISTIAN IN HIS LONELINESS.

No believer traverses all the road to heaven in company. Lonely spots there must be here and there, though the greater part of our heavenward pilgrimage is made cheerful by the society of fellow travelers. "They go from company to company; every one of them in Zion appeareth before God." Christ's sheep love to go in flocks. "They that feared the LORD spake often one to another." We take sweet counsel together and walk to the house of God in company. Yet somewhere or other on the road, every man will find narrow defiles and close places where pilgrims must march in single file.

Sometimes, the child of God endures loneliness arising from *the absence of godly society*. It may be that in his early days as a Christian, he mixed much with gracious persons, was able to attend many of their meetings, and to converse in private with the excellent of the earth. But now his lot is cast where he is as a sparrow alone on the housetop.

No others in the family think as he does, he enjoys no familiar converse concerning his Lord, and has no one to counsel or console him. He often wishes he could find friends to whom he could open his mind. He would rejoice to see a Christian minister or an advanced believer, but like Joseph in Egypt, he is a stranger in a strange land.

This is a very great trial to the Christian, an ordeal of the most severe character. Even the strong may dread it and the weak are sorely shaken by it. To such lonely ones, our Lord's words, now before us, are commended with the prayer that they may make them their own—"I am alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me."

When Jacob was alone at Bethel, he laid down to sleep and soon was in a region peopled by innumerable spirits, above whom was God Himself. That vision made the night at Bethel the least lonely season that Jacob ever spent. [See sermon #402, Jacob's Waking Exclamation] Your meditations, O solitary ones, as you read the Bible in secret, and your prayer's, as you draw near to God in your lonely room, and your Savior Himself in His blessed person, will be to you what the ladder was to Jacob.

The words of God's Book, made living to you, shall be to your mind the angels, and God Himself shall have fellowship with you. If you lament your loneliness, cure it by seeking heavenly company. If you have no companions below who are holy, seek all the more to commune with those who are in heaven, where Christ sits at the right hand of God.

God's people are frequently made lonely *through obedience to honest convictions*. It may happen that you live in the midst of professing Christians, but you have received light upon a part of God's Word which you had formerly neglected, either a doctrine merely, or an ordinance, or some other matter—and having received that light, if you are as you should be—you are at once obedient to it.

It will frequently result, from this action on your part, that you will greatly vex many good people whom you love and respect, but to whose wishes you cannot yield. Your Master's will once known, father or mother may not stand in your way—you do not wish to be singular, or obstinate, or offensive—but you must do the Lord's will even if it should sever every fond connection.

Perhaps, for a time, prejudiced persons may almost deny you Christian fellowship. Many a baptized believer has been made to know what it means to be almost tabooed and shut out because he cannot see as others see, but is resolved to follow his conscience at all hazards. Under such circumstances, even in a godly household, a Christian who fully carries out his convictions may find himself treading a separated path. Be bold, my dear brethren, and do not flinch. Your Savior walked alone and you must do so too.

Perhaps this lone obedience is to be a test of your faith. Persevere. Yield not a particle of truth. These very friends, who now turn their backs on you, if they are good for anything, will respect you all the more for having the courage to be honest—and perhaps the day will come when, through your example, they will be led in the same obedient way.

At any rate, do not mar your testimony by hesitancy or wavering, but “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” Fall back upon this truth—you may displease and alienate friends and be charged with bigotry, self-will, and obstinacy, but you are not alone when you follow the path of obedience, for the Father is with you.

If what you hold is God's truth, God is with you in maintaining it. If the ordinance to which you submit was ordained by Christ, Jesus is with you in it. Care not how either the church or the world reviles you. Serve your Master and He will not desert you. With all due deference to others, pay yet greater deference to the Lord who bought you with His blood. And where He leads, follow without delay—the Father will be with you in so doing.

The solitary way is appointed to *believers who rise to eminence of faith*. In these days, the common run of Christians have but struggling faith. Should you sift the great mountain of visible Christianity very carefully, will you find so much as ten grains of faith in the whole? When the Son of man comes, keen as His eyes are to discover faith, shall He find it on the earth?

Here and there, we meet a man to whom it is given to believe in God with mighty faith. As soon as such a man strikes out on a project and sets about a work which none but men of his mold would venture upon, straightway there arises a clamor, “The man is overzealous,” or he will be charged with an innovating spirit, rashness, fanaticism, or absurdity.

Should the work go on, the opposers whisper together, “Wait a little while and you'll see the end of all this wildfire.” Have we not heard them criticize an earnest evangelist by saying, “His preaching is mere excitement, the result of it is spasmodic”? At another time, “The enterprise which he carries out is Quixotic. His designs are Utopian”?

What said the sober semi-faith of men to Luther? Luther had read this passage, “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.” He went to a venerable divine about it and complained of the enormities of Rome. What was the good but weak brother's reply? “Go thou to thy cell, and pray and study for thyself, and leave these weighty matters alone.”

Here it would have ended had the brave Reformer continued to consult with flesh and blood, but his faith enabled him to go alone, if none would accompany him. He nailed up his theses on the church door

and showed that one man at least had faith in the Gospel and in its God. Then trouble came, but Luther minded it not because the Father was with him.

We also must be prepared, if God gives us strong faith, to ride far ahead like spiritual Uhlans, who bravely pioneer the way for the rank and file of the army. It were well if the church of God had more sons swifter than eagles and bolder than lions in God's service—men who can do and dare alone—till laggards gain courage from them and follow in their track.

These Valiant-for-truths full often pursue a solitary path, but let them console themselves with this word of the solitary Savior, "Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." If we can but believe in God, He will never be behindhand with us. If we can dare, God will do. If we can trust, God will never allow us to be confounded, world without end. It is sweet beyond expression to climb where only God can lead and plant the standard on the highest towers of the foe.

Another form of loneliness is the portion of *Christians when they come into deep soul-conflict*. My brethren, some of you understand what I mean by that. Our faith, at times, has to fight for very existence. The old Adam within us rages mightily and the new spirit within us, like a young lion, disdains to be vanquished and so these two mighty ones contend till our spirit is full of agony.

Some of us know what it is to be tempted with blasphemies we would not dare repeat, to be vexed with horrid temptations which we have grappled with and overcome, but which have almost cost us resistance unto blood. In such inward conflicts, saints must be alone. They cannot tell their feelings to others—they would not dare to do so. And if they did, their own brethren would despise or upbraid them, for the most of professors would not even know what they meant—and even those who have trodden other fiery ways would not be able to sympathize in all, but would answer them thus, "Those are points in which I cannot go with you."

Christ alone was tempted in all points like as we are, though without sin. No one man is tempted in all points exactly like another man and each man has certain trials in which he must stand alone amid the rage of war, with not even a book to help him, or a biography to assist him—no man ever having gone that way before except that one Man whose trail reveals His nail-pierced feet. He alone knows all the devious paths of sorrow. Yet, even in such by-ways, the Father is with us, helping, sustaining, and giving us grace to conquer at the close.

We will not, however, dwell on this aspect of solitary walking, for we have three others to mention. Many dear brethren have to endure *the solitude of unnoticed labor*. They are serving God in a way which is exceedingly useful, but not at all noticeable. How very sweet to many workers are those little corners of the newspapers and magazines which describe their labors and successes. Yet some, who are doing what God will think a great deal more of at the last, never see their names in print.

Yonder beloved brother is plodding away in a little country village—nobody knows anything about him, but he is bringing souls to God. Unknown to fame, the angels are acquainted with him and a few precious ones whom he has led to Jesus know him well.

Perhaps yonder sister has a little class in the Sunday school. There is nothing striking in her or in her class. Now and then a little child ascends to heaven to report her success and occasionally another comes into the church—but nobody thinks of her as a very remarkable worker. She is a flower that blooms almost unseen, but she is none the less fragrant.

Or shall we think of the humble City Missionary? The Superintendent of the District knows that he goes his regular rounds, but he has no idea of the earnest prayers and deep devotedness of that obscure lover of Jesus. The City Mission Magazine puts him down as trying to do his duty, but nobody knows what it costs him to cry and sigh over souls.

There is a Bible-woman—she is mentioned in the Report as making so many visits a week, but nobody discovers all that she is doing for the poor and needy, and how many are saved in the Lord through her instrumentality. Hundreds of God's dear servants are serving Him without the encouragement of man's approving eye—yet God is with them.

Never mind where you work—care more about how you work. Never mind who sees or does not see you, as long as God approves your efforts. If He smiles, be content. We cannot be always sure when we are most useful.

A certain minister with very great difficulty reached a place where he had promised to preach. There was deep snow upon the ground, therefore only one hearer came. However, he preached as zealously as if there had been a thousand. Years later, when he was travelling in that same part of the country, he met a man who had been the founder of a church in the village, and from it scores of other churches had been established.

The man came to see him and said, "I have good reason to remember you, sir, for I was once your only hearer. And what has been done here has been brought about instrumentally through my conversion under that sermon." We cannot estimate our success. One child in the Sunday school, converted, may turn out to be worth five hundred others, because he may be the means of bringing ten thousand to Christ.

It is not the acreage you sow, it is the multiplication which God gives to the seed, which will make up the harvest. You have less to do with being successful than with being faithful. Your main comfort is that, in your labor, you are not alone, for God, the eternal One, who guides the marches of the stars, is with you.

There is such a thing—I would that we might reach it—as *the solitude of elevated piety*. In the plain, everything is in company, but the higher you ascend, the more lonely is the mountain path. At this moment, there must be an awful solitude on the top of Mont Blanc. Where the stars look silently on the monarch of mountains, how deep the silence above the untrodden snows! How lonely is the summit of the Matterhorn, or the peak of Monte Rosa!

When a man grows in grace, he rises out of the fellowship of the many and draws nearer to God. Unless placed in very happy circumstances, he will find very few who understand the higher life and can thoroughly commune with him. But then the man will be as humble as he is high, and he will fall back, necessarily and naturally, upon the eternal fellowship of God. As the mountain pierces the skies and offers its massive peak to be the footstool of the throne of God, so the good man passes within the veil, unseen by mortal eyes, into the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High, where he abides under the shadow of the Almighty.

The last solitude will come to us all *in the hour of death*. Down to the river's brink they may go with us, a weeping company—wife, and children, and friends. Their kind looks will mean the help they cannot give. To that river's brink they may go in fond companionship, but then, as with our Lord, the cloud received Him out of His disciples' sight, so must we be received out of sight of our beloved ones.

The chariot of fire must take Elijah away from Elisha. We must ascend alone. Bunyan may picture Christian and Hopeful together in the stream, but it is not so—they pass each one alone through the river. Yet we shall not be alone, my brethren—we correct our speech—the Father will be with us. Jesus will be with us. The Eternal Comforter will be with us. The everlasting Godhead in the Trinity of persons shall be with us, and the angels of God shall be our convoy. Let us go our way, rejoicing that, when we shall be alone, we shall not be alone, because the Father will be with us—as He is with us even now.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 16:1-22

Verse 1. *These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.*

"That you should not be scandalized when you see Me put to death, and when you miss My bodily presence from your midst. I want to prepare you for the shame and death that lie before Me, and also prepare you for all that lies before you, for many of you will have to drink of My cup and to be baptized

with My baptism.” “These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended,” or ashamed, or scandalized, or caused to stumble when they come to pass.

2. *They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.*

That terrible “time” did come very soon—and the Jewish and other persecutors hunted down the Christians in almost every place where they could be found. Nothing would satisfy their cruel foes but the blood of multitudes of martyrs, and many of the persecutors actually thought that they were doing God service while they were putting His children to torture and death.

3-4. *And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.*

To be forewarned is to be forearmed, especially when the Lord Jesus Christ gives the forewarning. And His disciples were thus to be forearmed and braced up for the coming conflict.

4. *And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.*

“I needed not, at the beginning of My ministry, to trouble you about these things. Even then, you and I were hated by evil men, but I was with you, so I was able to protect you from them.” The persecutors could not slay Christ’s sheep, as they desired to do, as long as their Shepherd was still with them, so His warning words were not needed while He was in their midst.

Christ does not teach us everything at once—if He did, we might be so confused that we should not learn anything. Perhaps we have sometimes wished that our ears could hear more than they now do, but it is most probable that if we could hear more, we should really understand less than we do now. Have you, at any time, had your hearing more than usually acute? If so, you must then have heard a thousand sounds which it would have been better for you not to have heard, for they so confused and confounded one another that you did not hear anything distinctly.

It is just so with the mind—it is capable of receiving a certain quantity of the truth, but if too much truth is placed before it at once, it produces confusion in the mind’s ear and in the mind’s eye, and we really hear less, see less, and understand less than we should do if less truth were set before us. The Master knew that His disciples were like narrow-necked bottles, which must be gradually filled, so He only revealed the truth to them as they were able to receive it.

5-6. *But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.*

Sorrow sometimes prevents us from learning the lessons that Christ wishes to teach us. You remember that in the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ’s disciples were “sleeping for sorrow,” and so they lost some of the lessons that they might otherwise have learned. Those who are in great trouble are often in that dazed condition in which half-awakened persons are. And there is a measure of sleepiness about us all in times of sorrow. It was so with the disciples on this occasion, and therefore, they did not ask their Lord what they might have asked Him if sorrow had not filled their hearts—“None of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?”

7-9. *Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; [See sermon #1701, The Holy Spirit’s Threefold Conviction of Men]*

Which is the head of all sin, the root of all sin, the sin which lies in front of the door of mercy and blocks the sinner’s way. Oh, that the Spirit of God would convince all here who are not believers on the Lord Jesus Christ, that they are living in the greatest of all sins, “because they believe not on Christ”.

10. *Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;*

Of course, Christ would not have been received back by His Father if He had not completed the work of righteousness which His Father gave Him the commission to perform. The risen and glorified Savior is the great testimony to the righteousness both of Christ and of His Gospel.

11. *Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.*

Christ has already judged the prince of the powers of evil, so you may depend upon it that He will also judge all those who are under the dominion of the traitor prince who has usurped his Master's position and authority. Christ has summoned the dread lord of evil to His bar and judged him. Think not, O you who are his servants, that any of you will be able to elude the vigilance of the great Judge of all! Judgment will assuredly come to the common soldiers of the prince of darkness since their captain himself has been judged and condemned.

12. *I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.*

Here again observe the reticence of the Savior for His disciples' good—still graciously keeping from them what they could not bear to hear. And are not you, beloved, thankful that you do not, at this moment, know what is to happen to you in the future? It is wise for each one of us to say,—

*“My God, I would not wish to read
My fate with curious eyes;—
What gloomy lines are writ for me,
Or what bright scenes arise.”*

It is best for you, at present, to know but little. Prize what you do know and be content to leave all that is not yet revealed, for “the secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever.”

13. *Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth:* [See sermon #50, The Holy Ghost—The Great Teacher]

All that you need to know, and may know, He will teach you. If you cannot find your way into the heart of any truth, the Spirit of God has the clue to it, so ask Him to guide you into it. There is such a thing as seeing the outside of a truth—that is good as far as it goes, but the blessedness lies in getting to the inside of the truth—the very kernel and core of it.

13-14. *For he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me:* [See sermons #465, The Holy Spirit Glorifying Christ; #2213, Honey in the Mouth, and #2382, The Spirit's Chief Office]

That is the distinctive mark of the Spirit of God. If any man says that he speaks by the Spirit, you can test him in this way—does what he say glorify Christ? If not, away with him, for he is not speaking as the Holy Spirit speaks.

14-18. *For he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you. A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.*

These disciples of Christ were almost as ignorant as the rank outsiders were. Though they had been with Jesus for three years, they had not learnt what is clear enough to every Sunday school child today, and what is certainly perfectly understood by all who are taught of God. They said, “What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.”

19-22. *Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.*

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