

THE LIVING CARE OF THE DYING CHRIST

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A SERMON
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“Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.”
John 18:8-9

THE two remarkable miracles which our Lord worked in the Garden of Gethsemane ought not to be lightly passed over. The first was the falling to the ground of the soldiers and the servants of the priests. Jesus did but speak to them, and there was such power and majesty about His presence and His voice that “they went backward, and fell to the ground.” They were quite unable to seize Him. Here was a display in some measure of Christ’s divine power. These men would have fallen into the grave, and into hell itself, if Jesus had put forth the full force of His strength. He only spoke a word, and down they fell, they had no power whatever against Him.

Beloved, take comfort from this miracle. When the enemies and foes of Christ come against Him, He can easily overthrow them. Many times have there been crises in the church’s history when it seemed as if the truth would be destroyed. Then has come the opportunity for divine interposition. A word from Christ has vanquished His enemies. They that were waiting, like lions ready to leap upon their prey, have been disappointed. Jesus has but spoken, and they have fallen backward to the ground. Wherefore, take heart, and be not dismayed even in the darkest hour. Let Christ only utter a word and the victory is certain to be with Him.

The other miracle was this, that seeing the company that came together to take Him, He should be able at pleasure to screen His disciples so that not one of them was injured. The ear of the high priest’s servant was cut off, it was the opposite party that received the wound, but no ear of Peter or finger of John was smitten. The apostles escaped altogether unharmed, they were not able to protect themselves, being a very small number as compared with the posse that had come forth from the high priest, yet their Master preserved them, from which learn that the Lord Jesus Christ is able to take care of His own. When they seem to be like so many lambs in the midst of wolves, He can keep them so that no wolf can devour them. He has done it, and He will continue to do it. “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

He will preserve you by His own miraculous power, and you need not be dismayed at any force that is arrayed against you. Think, then, of those two miracles. You may need to remember them, there may come a time when it shall be a great joy to you to think of Christ, all ruddy from the bloody sweat, yet driving back His adversaries with a word, and rescuing the little handful of His disciples from anything like harm.

But in my text I notice something which seems to me very remarkable. “If therefore,” said Jesus, “ye seek me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled.” After such an expression you naturally expect some Old Testament text, something said by David in the Psalms, or by one of the prophets, Isaiah, or Ezekiel, but it is not so, it is, “that the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.” It is but an hour or two since Jesus uttered this sentence, but it is already among the inspired Scriptures, and it begins to take effect and to be fulfilled at once. It is not the age of God’s word, but the verity of it, that constitutes its power. What Christ had said that

very night in prayer was as true and as much the word of a King as that which God had spoken by His Spirit through holy men ages before.

Beloved, learn this lesson. The word of Christ is to be depended upon, you may hang your whole destiny upon it. What Christ has said is full of truth. He is Yea and Amen, and so are all His words, they stand fast forever and ever, like His own eternal Godhead. Wherefore, since this word of Christ, which had only just been spoken, must be fulfilled, believe that every word of His will be carried out to the utmost. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one word which was spoken by our Savior shall ever fail, it shall not fail even the least of you in your worst hour of peril. I read this truth in the text with very great delight. We might have expected to find an Old Testament Scripture quoted here, but the New Testament Scripture is put upon the same level as the Old, and coming from the lips of Christ we are pleased to see it so soon fulfilled.

The soldiers and officers from the chief priests had come forth that night especially to arrest Christ. Peter, James, John, Bartholomew, Thomas, and the rest of the apostles, are all there, but Judas has come to betray, not the servants, but their Master, and they who are with the traitor have come to take, not the disciples, but their Lord. To me, there is something encouraging about this fact, although it is a dismal one. The fight of the great adversary is not so much against us as against our Master. Satan's emissaries are very furious sometimes with the faithful defenders of the truth, but their fury is not so much against them as against the truth and against the Christ who is the center of that truth.

In olden times, they hated Luther, and Calvin, and Zwingli, and the rest of the Reformers, but the main point of attack was the doctrine of justification by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and at this day the great fight is around the cross. Did Jesus die as His people's Substitute? That is the question, and there are some, I grieve to say it, to whom that text is applicable, "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"

This is the chief aim of the enemy's assaults, to get rid of Christ, to get rid of the atonement, to get rid of His suffering in the room and place and stead of men. They say they can embrace the rest of the Gospel, but what "rest" is there? What is there left? A bloodless, Christless Gospel is fit neither for the land nor for the dunghill, it neither honors God nor converts the sons of men.

This is our consolation, that the attack is, after all, against the Master Himself. Our Lord Jesus Christ is still the great butt for the archer's arrows. Though His enemies do not always let His disciples go their way, yet they do seek *Him*, it is against Him that they rave most of all. As it is the quarrel of God's covenant, He will fight it out to the end, and so far as your part in the battle is concerned, as it is for His truth, His eternal power and Godhead, and His great sacrifice, you may safely go through with it, for he who fights for this cause shall surely have God with him.

Now let us come to our text, and try to learn some lessons from it. I notice here, first, *Christ's dying care for His disciples*. Then, next, I see that *His care extends to their bodies*, and, thirdly, I observe that *His care offers Himself instead of them*. He thrusts Himself upon the edge of the adversaries' sword, and says, "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way."

I. First, then, I call upon you to notice in our text CHRIST'S DYING CARE FOR HIS DISCIPLES. Let me correct what I have said, and put it, THE LIVING CARE OF THE DYING CHRIST, for you see He is occupied first of all with His disciples' safety.

The soldiers have come to seize Him, but He does not seek to escape. They bind Him, but He does not burst His bonds. They will take Him to prison, and to death, but He has not a word to say in His own defense, He utters no curse against His persecutors. His one thought is for His disciples, His ruling passion is strong in death, His love still masters Him.

This was the more wonderful because He was *in the first brunt of the danger*. He had been betrayed by Judas, and the high priest's servants were gathering about Him to capture Him, yet He was calm and quiet, and His one thought was concerning the eleven who were with Him. Usually, we become quieter

when we get used to a trouble, it is in the first fluster of it that we are disconcerted, and thrown off balance. I suppose it is so with you, I know it is so with me. We learn, after a little while, to look calmly around us, we gird up the loins of our mind, and we begin to think as we should think, but at first we are like birds driven out to sea by a rough wind, that have not learned yet to manage their wings in the gale.

It was not so with our Savior. In that first moment of attack He still thought of His disciples. Oh, the splendor of that love which could not be disturbed! Many waters could not quench it even at their first breaking out, nor could the floods drown it when they were swollen to their height! Beloved, Jesus never forgets you who are His own. Never does anything happen in this world or in heaven that leads Him to forget you. He has graven your names upon the palms of His hands, they are written upon His heart, so be it the first brunt of your battle or of His own, He still thinks of you, and cares for you.

But it is more remarkable still that Jesus thought of His disciples *in the faintness of His agony*. All crimson from the bloody sweat, He rose from under the olive trees, and came forward, and stood there in the torchlight before His persecutors, but the light that fell upon His brow revealed no care for anything but the safety of His followers. His whole soul had gone out to them. That crimson sweat meant a heart flowing out at every pore with love for those whom His Father had given Him, and whom He had so long preserved. I doubt not that He was faint with the dreadful agony. He must have been brought to the very lowest point of endurance by it, yet He still thought of His disciples.

Beloved, when you and I are sick and faint, other people do not expect us to think of them. We grow a little selfish when we are weak and ill, we want water to moisten our lips, we expect our friends to watch over us, and wipe the sweat from our brow. It was not so with our Master, He came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and He does so by saying to the rabble throng, "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way."

And mark, dear friends that our Lord Jesus was not only in the brunt of danger, and in the faintness of His agony, but He was *in full prospect of a cruel death*. He knew all that was to be done to Him. When you and I have to suffer, we do not know what is before us, it is a happy circumstance that we do not. But Jesus knew that they would buffet Him, that they would blindfold Him, that they would spit in His face, that they would scourge Him, He knew that the crown of thorns would tear His temples, He knew that He would be led forth like a malefactor, bearing the gibbet on His shoulder. He knew that they would nail His feet and hands to the cruel cross, He knew that He would cry, "I thirst," He knew that His Father must forsake Him on account of the sin of man that would be laid upon Him.

He knew all that, these huge Atlantic billows of grief cast their spray in His face already, His lips were salt with the brine of His coming grief, but He did not think of that, His one thought was for His beloved, those whom His Father had given Him. Till He dies, He will keep His eye on His sheep, and He will grasp His Shepherd's crook with which to drive the foe from them. Oh, the all-absorbing, self-consuming love of Christ! Verily, it was like coals of juniper, which have a most vehement flame.

Do you know that love, beloved? If so, let your hearts reciprocate it, loving Him in return with all the strength of your life, and all the wealth of your being. Even then you can never love Him as He has loved you.

I must add that it was all the more remarkable that Jesus should continue to think of His disciples at such a time when *He knew what they were*. They had been asleep, even while He was in the bloody sweat. Even the three whom He had chosen as His bodyguard, and stationed within a stone's cast of His terrible agony, had slept. Jesus knew also that the eleven would all forsake Him and flee, and that one of them would even deny Him, yet He thought of them.

O Lord, how can You think of such sinful creatures as we are? I feel glad that these apostles were not perfect. We must not rejoice in anything that is evil, but still it is some comfort to me that though they were such poor creatures as they were, Jesus cared for them, for now I can believe that He loves me. Though I sleep when I ought to wake and watch with Him, yet He loves me. Although, under the brunt of a strong temptation, I may flee, still He loves me, ay, and even if I should deny Him, yet I can understand that, as He loved Peter, He may still love me.

O faulty saints, you who do love Him, and yet often fail Him, you who do trust Him, and yet are oftentimes dismayed, gather strength, I pray you, from this wonderful love of Jesus! Is not the love of Christ a mass of miracles, all wonders packed together? It is not a subject for surprise that He should love, but that He should love such worms as we are, that He should love us when we were dead in trespasses and sins, that He should love us into life, should love us despite our faults, should love us to perfection, and should love us till He brings us to share His glory. Rejoice, then, in this wondrous care of Christ—the dying Christ with a living care for His disciples.

II. But now, secondly, HIS CARE EXTENDS TO THEIR BODIES.

I will not be long upon this point, but I want you to note some of the sweetness there is in it. When I was reading to you just now, you must have noticed that our Lord said, “Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost.” Surely He meant that He kept them from wandering into sin, did He not? Did He not mean that He kept them unto eternal salvation? Undoubtedly He did, but the greater includes the less. He who keeps a man, keeps the whole man, spirit, soul, and body. So our Lord Jesus here interprets His own prayer, which dealt with the souls of His people. He mainly interprets it as to their bodies, for He bade those who came to seize Him to let His disciples go, saying, “If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way.”

You say to me, “That is a small interpretation of a great utterance.” I know it is, and that is the comfort of it, that if there be small meanings to the promises, you may quote them, and pray for them, as well as believe in and pray for the greater and immeasurable meaning of the promises. I like to believe that He who loves me as an immortal spirit, loves me as a mortal man. He who loves me as I shall be before His throne in glory, loved me as I was when I hung upon my mother’s breast, and loves me as I now am, with many a weakness and infirmity clinging to me. He, who takes care of the soul, takes care of the body too.

Notice that *this care of our Lord was effectual*. Is it not singular that none of those soldiers and servants of the high priest touched one of the eleven? Is it not remarkable that Malchus, having lost his right ear, did not feel it his duty to thrust at Peter? But the Savior interposes, and just touches the wounded ear, and it is healed, and Peter is suffered to go. That act of Peter was enough to bring on a battle royal all round, and we know that the whole eleven had only two swords between them. They could have made only a very feeble stand against a band of armed men, yet not one of them was injured. How well does Jesus protect His own!

What is more remarkable, the apostles were not harmed at the time of Christ’s death. It would not at all have surprised me if the mob that cried, “Crucify him, crucify him,” had also said, “Here are some of His disciples, let us put them also to death, let us increase the agonies of the dying Nazarene by the slaughter of His disciples before His eyes.” Yet not a dog moved his tongue against them. And when it was reported that Christ had risen from the dead, why did not His enemies pounce upon Mary Magdalene, and the rest of the women?

Forty days was Jesus on the earth, and I do not find that in all that time there was any hindrance to the coming or going anywhere of any one of His disciples. After the Holy Spirit had been poured out, there came a time of persecution, but until then it was not in the Savior’s mind that the Jews should touch one of His disciples, and they could not do it.

The devil cannot go any farther than his chain permits, and the worst enemies of Christ can do no more than Christ allows. What an effectual care was this of the Master, which held the broad shield of His divine protection not only over the eleven, but also over all the rest of the faithful! He was at His lowest when they took Him, and bound Him, and led Him away, but even then, with His sovereign word, He protected His people from all harm, as to their bodies as well as their souls.

Notice also that *it was needful that they should have special protection*. Jesus meant them all to remain alive to see Him after His death, that they might be witnesses of His resurrection. They were a little handful of seed corn, and He would not have one grain wasted, because it was by that precious wheat that His church was to be fed, and the world was to be sown with spiritual life.

Besides, they were not ready yet to bear persecution. Afterwards they bore it manfully, joyfully, but just now they were poor feeble children, until the Spirit of God was poured out.

Brethren, the Lord Jesus Christ can shelter us from sickness, and from every kind of bodily affliction, until we are fit to bear it, and He can also preserve us from death till our work is done. It is a good saying, though it is not a Scriptural one, "We are immortal till our work is done." If God has given you anything to do, get you to the doing of it, the time is short, but dream not that you shall be cut off too soon. You have a work for your time, and you shall have time for your work. Believe it, and you may go between the jaws of behemoth without a fear, while God has work for you to accomplish for Him, wherefore, be not afraid, for Jesus says, "Let these go their way."

Once more, *the care which the Lord took of His people was much better than their own care.* See, Peter is going to take care of his Master, and he makes a poor mess of it, but when his Master took care of him that was a very different affair. Peter is going to fight for his brethren, out comes the sword, off goes the ear of Malchus, and Peter probably regretted that he had not cut off his head. But what good did Peter do? He only increased the danger they were in, and made the men feel the more furious against them. But Christ's word was ample, here was sufficient defense for all the apostles, "Let these go their way," and go their way they did.

Brothers and sisters, we should do a deal better in many things if we did not do anything at all. There is many a man who is drowning, and makes his drowning sure by his struggling. I am told that, if he could but lie still on his back, he would float, and I believe that, in many a trouble, we make the trouble ten times worse by our kicking and plunging. "O rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him." Especially do so if it is a matter of scandal.

If anybody speaks evil of you, do not answer him. I have had a great deal of experience of this kind—perhaps as much as anybody—and I have always found that, if I got a spot of mud anywhere on my coat, and I proceeded to brush it off, it was much worse than before. Let it alone till it is dry, then it will come off easily. Perhaps even then you had better leave somebody else to do your clothes-brushing and your boot-cleaning, you cannot do it nearly so well yourself as somebody else can do it for you. I say again, we should do better often if we did nothing. These eleven apostles did best when Peter had put up that ugly old sword of his, and left off fighting, and at His Master's word went away safe and sound from the armed men who had arrested His Lord.

Beloved, you are all right if you are in Jesus Christ's hands, right for your body, right for your estate, right for your character, right for little things as well as for great, if you just leave all in those dear hands that never fail, because they act for the dear heart that never ceases to beat with infinite affection towards all those whom the Father has given to Him.

III. I have continued longer than I intended, so I am coming now to the third and last point, which is this, CHRIST'S CARE LED HIM TO OFFER HIMSELF INSTEAD OF HIS PEOPLE.

Jesus said, "If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way." This was as much as to say, "*You cannot hurt both Myself and My people.*" This is a great truth, though I put it very simply to you. When the judgments of God are abroad, it is not possible that they should fall on both Christ and His people. Was Jesus Christ the Substitute for His people? Grant that, then, if the punishment of sin fell on Christ, it cannot fall on those for whom Christ died. It is not according to natural justice, much less divine justice, first that the Substitute should suffer, and then the person for whom He stood as Substitute should also suffer. That cannot be. Why have a Substitute at all, unless that Substitute by His suffering clears those for whom He was substituted?

I will give you a very simple illustration, you will find it in the Book of Deuteronomy. There is the old divine ordinance that, when a man found a bird's nest, and there were young birds in the nest, if he took the young, he must let the mother bird go free, he must not take both, that was contrary to the divine law. So, Christ may die, or His people may die, but not both of them. Justice will not have it that they shall both suffer, and the Lord Jesus Christ gives a tongue to that great law when He says, "If ye seek me, here I am, but let these go their way, for you cannot take us both." That were contrary to the

sacred law, and to the divine equity which lies at the bottom of everything that is true. Did Christ, my Ransom, die for me? Then I shall not die. Did He pay my debt? Then it is paid, and I shall not be called upon to pay it.

*“If Thou hast my discharge procured,
And freely in my room endured
The whole of wrath divine;
Payment God cannot twice demand,
First at my bleeding Surety’s hand,
And then again at mine.”*

Did Jesus suffer in my stead without the city gate? Then, turn you, my soul, unto your rest, since He died for you. Justice could not claim both the Surety and those for whom He stood as Substitute, but beloved, *it was the Master who died*. They did seek Him, they did take Him, they did crucify Him, He did bear it all as His people’s Substitute. “The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.” Do not be deceived about this matter, but grip it as a fact most sure that the Lord Jesus Christ did bear His people’s sins in His own body on the tree. “The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” Men and brethren, I am not making this up, and telling you words of my own. These are the precious truths of Holy Writ, divinely inspired. Oh, that all would believe them!

Christ has suffered in the stead of His people. What then? As I have said to you before, both cannot suffer, therefore, as Jesus suffered, *you who are His people are clear*. Perhaps you will go down to the grave, unless the Lord should speedily come, we shall die, but since Jesus died, death cannot hold us. The resurrection trumpet will ring out its silver note, and this will be the message to the dull cold ear of death, “Since I died, let these go their way,” and every sepulcher shall open wide, the caverns of death shall no longer enclose the bodies of the saints, but from beds of dust and silent clay, the whole of Christ’s redeemed shall rise. Because He lives, they shall live also.

Death sought Him, and therefore death must let these who belong to Him go their way, and as for justice, there comes the dread tremendous day, the day for which all other days were made, the day of judgment, and of condemnation of ungodly men. Shall I stand shivering before that eternal judgement seat? Nay, not so. Shall I feel the earth quake beneath me, and see heaven splitting above me, and the stars falling like withered leaves in autumn? Doubtless it will be so. Will the avenging angel come, with his dread sword of fire, and sweep us poor sinful ones away? He will, unless we are in Christ, but if we are among the blood-redeemed ones, he must stay his fiery vengeance, for there shall come a voice from the risen and reigning Savior, “Thou hast smitten me, therefore let these go their way,” and because He died for us, we shall go our way.

Which way? Up yonder shining staircase, made of light, up where the angels come and go, we shall make our way, like children who run upstairs at home, up into the world of light, and to the home of glory, where our Savior’s face is the sun, and His presence makes heaven. Yes, and this shall be our permit for ascending there, Jesus has loved us, and has died to redeem us from our sins.

With this I close, dear hearers. When I come into this pulpit, and especially during the last two or three Sunday nights, when I have felt my head swim at the sight of you, I seem like one standing on a high cliff, half afraid to remain there, and I think to myself, “Shall I long preach to these people?” Well, well, whether I do or do not, I would press home this question upon your consciences, as I shall meet you in that great day, *have you a share in Jesus Christ’s love and care?* Did He bear your sins in His own body on the tree? Do you believe in Him? That is, do you trust Him? Have you put your soul into His hands, that He may save it? If so, you are justified by Him, you are saved in Him.

Say, dear friend, next, do you obey Him? Is He your Master and Lord? Is His will the supreme law of your life? Or do you wish it to be so, and pray to make it so? Then again you may go your way, for Christ has stood in your stead. Do you suffer with Him? Are you willing to suffer for Him? There are some who will go with Christ if He will put on His silver slippers, His purple mantle, and His jeweled crown. How good they are! How bravely will they say, “I am a Christian,” when everybody will throw

primroses in their path! Ay, but when people sneer, and call you an old Puritan, a Methodist, a Presbyterian, or some other pretty name, and when those who preach to you are much abused, and ill things are said of them, can you take the side of a despised Christ? Can you stand at His cross? Can you own Him when the blood is dripping from His wounds, when everybody thrusts out their tongue at Him, and has ill words for the Crucified One? Can you say, “I love Him still”?

Remember the good Scotch woman, when Claverhouse had murdered her godly husband. “Ah!” he said, “what do you think of your bonny husband now?” and she answered, “I always thought my man was very beautiful, but I never saw him look as he does now that he has died for his Master.” Can you say the same of Christ? He was ever precious to me, I love Him in every shape and form, but when I see Him put on His crimson robe, and bleed at every pore for me, when the rubies are in His hands, and on His feet, and I see Him still despised and rejected of men, I love Him more than ever, and I love His cross, and take it up, I love His shame, and His reproach, and count it “greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.”

If it be so with you, if you are with Him in His shame, I will warrant that you shall be with Him in His glory. I count it to be a low position to be only with a reigning Christ on earth, and to go with Him only in fair weather. Oh, but this is the pledge and proof of love, if you are with Him when the snowflakes blow into your face, and the storm comes hurtling against you, and yet you can follow bravely where He leads the way! God make you such followers of the Crucified! May your feet know what it is to be pricked with thorns, or your head will never know what it is to feel the weight of the glory diadem! May you be willing to be despised and rejected, for if not, you have thrown away your crown! God bless you, dear friends, and blessed be His name for helping me again to speak to you tonight! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

John 17:1-12, 18:1-14

1. These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come;

This is in a very special sense our Lord’s prayer. What a word that is from the lips of Jesus, “Father”! This was the night of His deepest sorrow and His heaviest woe, but He begins His prayer with this tender expression, “Father, the hour is come,” the hour of darkness, the hour of His passion and death, had now arrived.

1. Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

Did Jesus look upon His suffering as His glory? He does not merely pray, “Sustain thy Son,” but “Glorify thy Son.” In truth, our Lord’s lowest stoop was His highest glory. He was never more resplendent than when He hung upon the cross, that was His true spiritual throne, so He prayed, “Glorify thy Son”—“Enable him to bear the agony, and to pass through it to glory.”

“That thy Son also may glorify thee.” The death of Christ was a great glorifying of God. We see His love and His justice rendered more glorious in the death of Christ than they would have been by any other method.

2. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

In this verse you get the doctrines of general and particular redemption blended. By His death, Christ obtained power over all flesh, His death had some relation to every man, but the special objective of it was the salvation of the elect. The purpose of the shower is to water one particular field, but the rain falls everywhere, so plenteous is the bounty of God. The objective of Christ’s atonement is to purchase eternal life for those who were given to Him by His Father, but He has also obtained power over all flesh.

3. *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

To know God, is eternal life. If you know God, if you know Jesus Christ whom He has sent, you are spiritually quickened. That knowledge has brought to you, nay, it is, in itself, the new life: “This is life eternal”—not life for a few years, but life eternal. Mark the final perseverance of the saints, how they shall hold on and hold out forever.

4. *I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gave me to do.*

Jesus regards His work as already done, although He had yet to die, to pay the ransom price for His people, yet, by a leap of holy faith He says, “I have finished the work which thou gave me to do.”

5. *And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*

Jesus had laid aside His glory for our sakes, now He asks that, His work being regarded as done, His glory may be given to Him again.

6. *I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.*

God’s people belong to Him, He gives them to His Son, Christ gives them His word, and they keep it, “They have kept thy word.” Do we keep God’s word? Do we hold to it? Do we make it the guide of our whole life? Do we seek to obey it? This is the token of God’s chosen people.

7-12. *Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.*

Christ always has kept His people, He still keeps His people, and He will keep His people forever. The sheep shall be delivered into the hand of the Father in full number, there shall not be one of them missing in that day when they shall pass under the rod of the great Shepherd.

We cannot read all this prayer of our Lord tonight, we must now go, in the language of the next chapter, with the Master into the garden of His grief.

Chapter 18. Verse 1. *When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron,—*

A dark, foul brook, through which flowed the blood and refuse from the temple. King David crossed that brook one night in bitter sorrow, and now the Savior crossed it when it was near to midnight, “He went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron.”

1-2. *Where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples. And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples.*

Our Lord went there to pray, and Judas knew that this was His custom. Are we such men of prayer that others know where we pray? Have you some familiar place where you go to meet your Lord? I am afraid that many know where we trade, and many know where we preach, but perhaps, few know where we pray. God grant that we may be often at the mercy seat! We should be better men and women if we were more frequently at the throne of grace.

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

“Lanterns” to give light to the Sun, “torches” to find out the Light of the world, “weapons” with which to fight with the Lamb of God, the unarmed Sufferer. Strange treatment this for Him who came to save and bless!

4-5. *Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye? They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he.*

Or, “I AM.” It is remarkable that Jesus should, in His betrayal, twice use this expression, thus uttering the very name of JEHOVAH.

5. *And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.*

What a hardened wretch he must have been to be able to stand with them! One would have thought that, having betrayed his Master, he would have hidden himself away for shame, but no, “Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them.” His heart must have been steeled.

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

Christ’s almighty power cast them down at once. He needed not to lift His hand or even His finger, He only said, “I AM,” and “they went backward, and fell to the ground.”

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

Do they return to the fray? Having once felt Christ’s divine power, do they summon courage enough to attack Him again? Yes, for there is no limit to the malice and impudence of the human heart.

8-10. *Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way: that the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none. Then Simon Peter—*

Always ready to boil over, ever full of zeal and rash impetuosity, Peter—

10. *Having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant’s name was Malchus.*

Peter struck at his head, he was not content with trying to wound, he meant to kill Malchus, and he did “cut off his right ear.”

11-14. *Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, and led him away to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year. Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.*

Saying a great deal more than he thought he was saying, for he uttered a great Gospel truth when he said, “It was expedient that one man should die for the people.”

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—382, 401, 293

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