

Precepts and Promises

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that true discipleship requires wholehearted obedience and self-sacrificial following of Christ, promising honor from the Father to those who serve Him faithfully.

Scripture: John 12:26, Matthew 10:38, Luke 9:23, Philippians 2:7, John 3:16, Romans 12:1, Hebrews 12:2

Topics: "Discipleship", "Obedience", "Self-Sacrifice"

Description

In this powerful expository sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the demands and promises of true Christian discipleship as taught by Jesus in John 12:26. Spurgeon challenges believers to obey Christ fully, imitate His life, and embrace self-sacrifice, highlighting the cost of following Jesus and the honor promised by God to His faithful servants. This sermon calls Christians to a deeper commitment and a clear understanding of what it means to serve Christ authentically.

Transcript

"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor." John 12:26.

I HAVE already said, in expounding the chapter from which my text is taken, that the sight of these Greeks who desired to see Jesus seems to have very greatly affected our Savior's mind. [See Exposition at end of sermon.] He had not had much to do with Gentiles, for, as far as His personal ministry upon the earth was concerned, He was not sent to the Gentiles, but only "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But now He sees, in those enquiring Greeks, the advance guard of that mighty host of Gentiles who, for these 1,800 years and more, have continued to seek Him out and to call Him their Leader, Friend and Savior! The thought of this great result of His life's work naturally led Him to also think of the Cross from which that result would spring. "These are the redeemed," He seemed to say to Himself, "then it is time for Me to think of the Redemption which I have yet to present on their behalf. These are the first fruits of My great harvest. Then I must see to the sowing of the Seed and I must set my mind steadfastly to think of that sowing, for unless the grain of wheat is cast into the ground, and die, it abides alone." So He began to feel the throes of desire for that Baptism wherewith He was to be baptized, for the joy that was set before Him was, just then, clearer than usual—the joy of winning souls and, especially, the joy of winning Gentile nations unto God and, therefore, His mind fixed itself more than ever upon the plan by which His people's redemption was to be achieved. Hence, I think, arose the words to which I called your attention while we were reading the chapter.

The sight of these Greeks also led the Savior to feel that He must again explain the conditions upon which He could receive disciples. There have been religious teachers who have been content to gather followers through falsehood or error. They have never properly explained what allegiance to them meant, or they have caught men by craft and guile. Our Lord Jesus Christ never did that. He said to any who proposed to follow Him, "Have you counted the cost?" He bade them not to begin to build their house if they were not able to finish it, nor to commence a warfare in which they could not reasonably expect victory. It seemed, sometimes, to be rather repelling men, than attracting them, to say to would-be disciples, "If you will follow Me, do this and do that"—perhaps some very trying ordeal—yet that was the Savior's usual habit. So, now, lest these Greeks should say that they would become His disciples without knowing what disciple-ship involved, He said to them, "I, Myself, will have to die in order that I may produce others like Myself, and you, if you become My disciples, will have to follow Me in this respect as well as in all other things. You will have to deny yourselves and to undergo self-sacrifice, for, otherwise, if you will not do this, it is no use for you to pretend to be My servants, for My servants you cannot be. If any man would serve Me, He must follow Me." It was the coming of these Greeks to Christ which led to the utterance of these words—and that incident, in a measure, explains them. Now may the Spirit of God impress the Savior's words upon your hearts as I try to speak to you about them!

Our text is divided into three sentences. The first is a sentence of precept—"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me." The second is a sentence of precept and promise, for, to this day, no scholar can tell whether it ought to be rendered, "Where I am, there let My servant be," or, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." Either may be a correct inter-

pretation of the original and, therefore, I take it in both senses as a sentence of precept and promise. Then the third is a sentence of pure promise—"If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."

I. First, then, we have A SENTENCE OF PRECEPT. "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me."

The Greek term used here might be translated, "If anyone will become a deacon—do a deacon's work, be My minister, My servant and wait upon Me—then let him follow Me." By which is intended, first, that, if you become Christ's servant, you must obey Him. This does not seem to occur to many professing Christians. They say they are Christians and, therefore, Christ's servants—yet they dare to sit in judgment upon Him and upon His precepts! They are a law unto themselves—they obey this precept because they like it and they disobey that other precept because they do not like it! They call Him Master and Lord, but He is not really their Master and Lord, for they do not obey Him. Paul rightly says, "To whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey." But if you simply take the name of Christ upon you and call yourself His servant, yet do not obey Him, but follow your own whim, or your own hereditary prejudice, or the custom of some erroneous church—you are no servant of Christ. If you really are a servant of Christ, your first duty is to obey Him.

In the Church of Christ, He is the only Legislator. Not all the bishops and clergy, nor the whole Church, if it could be summoned in one solemn conclave, could pass an ordinance that would have even the slightest force upon a Christian's conscience if it were contrary to the teachings of Christ, Himself! There is but one Head of the Church—one spiritual Rabbi and Infallible Teacher—and that is the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, and we are to understand, when we enter His Church and enlist under His banner, that we are to serve Him, and Him alone! We may serve others, as far as they are commissioned by Him, and as far as what they say is in harmony with His teaching, but no farther, for, "One is your Master, even Christ, and all you are brethren." Did you understand that, young Man, when you became a Christian? Did you

understand that, my Sister, when you professed to be a follower of Christ? I am afraid some professing Christians did not.

I bless God that this was one of the things which I learned when I first trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior. I felt, "Now I am going to be Christ's disciple, through His Grace, and I am going to do, as far as the Holy Spirit will help me, everything that I believe He commands me to do." I turned to the New Testament and read it for myself. I did not enquire of this teacher or that, but said to myself, "What does Jesus say? I will find out what He has revealed as His will concerning me." This way of acting gives a man independence of mind towards his fellow men and, at the same time, humble yet firm confidence in what he does in the sight of God. When he knows that he has submitted himself to the teaching of Christ and that he would not knowingly hold anything that Christ would not endorse, and would not willingly, either himself learn, or impart to others anything that Jesus Christ does not teach, it gives him a firm footing in the things of God.

Christian men and women, do you stand thus firmly? You know that many of you do not. You have another book, besides the Bible, which is your guide. The Bible alone is not the religion of many professing Christians. It is to some, but there are many who have another book to which they bow with almost equal reverence—and courts of law have to decide as to the shape of this garment or the other, or whether they shall turn their noses to the East or to the West, for they cannot do anything without calling in lawyers and judges! Yet God knows the Bible alone is quite enough. And if we did but follow its guidance, it would lead us rightly enough. I call you back, Christian men and women, to your allegiance to God's Holy Word! You owe none to any book except the one that He has given—and you are to regard no teaching but the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ and that which comes to you upon His sole authority. In this respect, He says to you, "If anyone serves Me, let Him follow Me"—that is, by obedience to His commands.

The next teaching of the text is this. If any man serves Christ, his service will be most like his Lord's when he does, as nearly as he can, what Christ did. He is your Master, but He is also your Exemplar. Suppose that you say to Him, "Blessed Lord Jesus, I am willing to obey You, but what is Your Law?" He replies, "I am My own Law. Imitate Me. Follow Me." If you want to obey Jesus instead of merely keeping the Law written upon stones, you can see the Law written out in His life—

"My dear Redeemer and my Lord, I read my duty in Your Word, But in Your life the Law appears Drawn out in living characters."

If you would obey Christ and so serve Him, be like He, for the sum and substance of His teaching is, "Follow Me." Watch, then, His every footstep, and ask for Grace to put your foot down where He put His. Whatever you see to be His temper under any circumstances, cultivate that temper when you are in similar circumstances. If you want to know what you should do at any special time, think what He would have done if He had been in your place, for what He would have done is what you should do. And if you know that any course that you are pursuing would not have been pursued by Christ and would not have been according to His mind, do not follow it any longer. If it is not in harmony with Christ's life, it is not the way for you to walk. If it is not that which you would have done if Christ stood by you and looked at you with His tender but piercing eyes of everlasting love—if it is not what you would have done in His immediate Presence, do not do it, for it is clearly not what you ought to do. You are His servant, so you are to obey Him and, in order to obey Him, you are to imitate Him.

I must, however, warn you, dear Friends, that if you do this—and you must if you mean to be His faithful follower, for this is the only way of being Christ's servant, indeed and of a truth—this following of Christ will bring you into very much the same condition as that in which your Lord was, that is, you will become a marked man! In the midst of the company that you frequent, you will be a speckled bird! You will not need to adopt any different mode of dress, for Jesus did not. He wore the common garb of the country and dressed just like any other man of His class. He affected no singularity in meat, or drink, or language, but He was singular, essentially, because the greatest singularity under Heaven is holiness. If you will just do the right and be the right before God, men will soon find you out—and you will first become the subject of their observation—by-and-by, of their reproach—perhaps, also, of persecution. But, whatever the consequences are, this is what you have to do. Hear what your Lord says—"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me."

"But, Lord, You had to go outside the camp." "Then follow Me there." "But, Lord, You had to endure the Cross." "And he who would be My disciple must take up his cross daily and come and follow Me." You cannot be Christ's servant if you are not willing to follow Him, cross and all! What do you crave? A crown? Then it must be a crown of thorns if you are to be like He!! Do you want to be lifted up? So you shall, but it will be upon a cross! In following Christ, you must be prepared to suffer persecution, loss and, if necessary, even death itself! Will you have Christ as your Lord and Master on these terms? If not, you cannot have Him at all! He does not want, as His followers, cowards who will sneak away from Him as soon as the first shot in the battle is fired. He does not want another Judas who will sell Him for the price of a slave. He wants true-hearted men who are determined, out of love to His glorious Character, and devotion to His Divine mission, that they will follow Him because they desire to serve Him.

Our Lord would also have us understand that if we mean to be His servants, we must follow Him even to the extent of being put into the ground to die—that is, self-sacrifice, self-abnegation and even self-annihilation. Our Lord Jesus Christ is at His best when He makes Himself of no reputation. I do not know any time when Christ seems so glorious as when He lays aside all His Glory and takes upon Himself all our shame. So, Brothers and Sisters, if you would follow Christ, you are not to bargain to be honored. On the contrary, you are to commence to strip off from yourself the garments of honor. You are not to bargain for ease, but are to put on the harness of a warrior who will get but little rest and who must constantly be on the watch. You are not to stipulate for this indulgence or that. What indulgence had your Lord? He had not where to lay His head! His life was spent amidst poverty and hardship! He kept nothing back from the sons of men—He emptied Himself that we might be filled.

There was not a grain of self-seeking in Him. He saved others—Himself He could not save. Oh, that we had even a few Christians who were like their Master in this respect! Few are there, in these evil days, who seem willing to sacrifice all for Christ's sake. The brave Covenanters could give up house, home and everything—and die for King Jesus on Scotland's bleak mountains. But we, in these easier times, are content to make money, as other people do—to live in ease and luxury, as other people do—to contribute our cheese-parings and our candle-ends to the cause of Christ and to think that we have done a great deal if we have done even as much as that! But where is the self-sacrifice? Where is the burying of one's self in the ground to die, like a grain of wheat? Where is the wish—the willingness—to lose reputation, to sever friendships, to sacrifice respect, to endure hardness so that we may be true to our conscience, faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ? May the Lord soon raise up among us more men and women of noble principle who will count God, and Christ, and truth, and eternity to be worth living for—and worth dying for—and who will count all things else but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our

Lord!

I will leave that first sentence of my text when I have made one more observation upon it. Perhaps somebody says, "I want to serve Christ and I am willing to make some self-denial for His sake. I have been thinking about saving my money and building a church or a chapel." Possibly another friend says, "I want to serve Christ, so I should like to give a painted window in His honor." Yes, but Christ Himself says to you, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me." The very best way of serving Christ is to do just what Christ was accustomed to do, as far as that is possible to you. This is a very blessed text for a poor man, for a sick man, for an illiterate man—in fact, for every man who really wants to serve Christ. If I want to serve Christ, what have I to do? To follow Him. If I am very ill, how am I to follow Him? Why, by bearing the affliction as patiently as He would have borne it! If I am very poor, how am I to follow Him? Why, by trusting in God, as He did! Suppose that I am very much maligned and slandered, what am I to do? I am to try to bear it as meekly as He would have borne it! You can accomplish a great deal, in that way, if you really try to do it. You nursery maids and you other servants who have to work hard to earn your daily bread—and you boys and girls, who are still at school—there is something that you can be, or do, or suffer by which you may prove your love to Christ—and that something is the best way in which you can follow Him.

It is sometimes the case that a person says, "I want to serve Christ, so I shall go into a nunnery, or into a monastery." Now, let me just ask this question—Did our Lord Jesus Christ ever act like that? He said, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me." Can you imagine Christ shutting Himself up in a monastery? What? The great battle of the ages to be fought and the Captain of our salvation concealing Himself and so setting us an example of how to be cowardly? You know He did not do that! So fight it out, man, even as He did, and do not go sneaking away and hiding yourself under the pretence of so serving the Lord Jesus Christ! That is sheer selfishness—there is a far better course than that for you to take! Give yourself up wholly to Jesus and do as Jesus would have done if He had been in your place, for so you will serve Him in the best possible fashion.

II. Now I turn to the second clause of my text which seems to me to be both A PRECEPT AND A PROMISE.

First, read it as a precept—"Where I am, there let My servant be." Wherever Jesus was and is, there you are to be if you are really His servant. In His relationship to God, how did Jesus stand? Well, He was wholehearted in His consecration—be you likewise. He began His public life by being baptized in Jordan, saying to John, "Thus it becomes us to fulfill all righteousness." If you are really His servant—you act in the same way. He came out into the midst of mankind to bear witness for God's Truth and He kept on bearing that witness. And He was content to be found in His place, as the faithful Witness, when the time came for Him to seal His testimony with His blood. Be you a witness-bearer for Him, whatever that witness bearing may cost you—

"Cold mountains and the midnight air Witnessed the fervor of His prayer"—so let midnight witness the fervor of your prayer, too. The attitude of Jesus towards God is shown by His saying in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Not as I will, but as You will." Servant of Christ, be you also found in the same attitude—bow before the Lord in the spirit of resignation to His holy will even though it should bring the death-sweat to your brow! Whatever it involves, mind that you say to God, "Your will be done." Wherever you see the Lord Jesus Christ in His relationship towards God—with the one exception of His substitutionary Sacrifice for sinners, in which you cannot follow Him—in everything else, if you would really

serve Him, follow Him! Where the Master is, there let His servant be.

Then, next, what was Christ's position with regard to men? He was in the midst of them and in all His relationships He was always the example of what His servants should be. As a child, He was subject to His parents. Godly children, that is what Christ would have you, also, to be. As a child, He grew in the knowledge and understanding of the Word, and in favor with God and with men. So seek, dear young people, to be always making progress in the Divine Life and to be growing up, as Christ did, well-pleasing unto God. When He had reached maturity, what was His attitude towards men? Why, He was the Lover of men! He was seldom angry with them, but often bearing their reproach. He was never selfish, but always ignoring Himself and living entirely for others. Someone has called Him "the great Philanthropist." I hardly like such a title for Him, for He rises far above all ordinary philanthropy—yet is it true that no one else ever loved men as He loved them and no one else ever made such sacrifices for them. Be you like Jesus in this respect, also, and wherever you see His footprint, seek to set your feet there.

Wherever there was a battle to be fought for truth and right, Christ was always to the front. And wherever there was reproach to be borne for God's sake, Christ was ready to bear it. The Pharisees could not silence Him, the Herodians could not make Him seek His escape. He was ready for every emergency that arose. Did God want a Witness? There was Christ. Did man need a Teacher? There was Christ. Were men sick? He was their Physician. Were they hungry? He was their Provider. Were His disciples liable to sink in a storm? He walked on the waters and rescued the frightened men. He was always giving Himself to the service of men and, Beloved, wherever your Master was in relation to men, there should you be. If you can conceive of a place where Christ would not go—do not go there. If you know of any company where Christ would not be found, do not be found there. But if you know of a place where Christ would go, there you also can go with safety, for it is your business to be where your Master would have been if He had been in your place—and never to be where your Master would not have gone!

We have thus looked at this sentence as a precept. Now let us regard it as a promise—"Where I am, there shall also My servant be." This is a very blessed promise. I do not recollect one that has more sweetness in it to my heart. We expect, Brothers and Sisters—unless Christ shall speedily come—we expect to die. When we fall asleep in Jesus, we shall be carried to the grave, even as Jesus was. We shall be in good company! It is, to my mind, a beautiful thought that when our Lord rose from the dead, He took off the grave clothes and left them in His sepulcher. And He unwound the napkin that was about His head and laid it by itself. So the grave is not an empty tenement without furniture. Christ has left the linen in which He slept to wrap His followers in—and He has put the napkin by itself for those who are left behind to wipe their eyes with. We rightly sing, with good Dr. Watts—

"The graves of all His saints He blessed, And softened every bed— Where should the dying members rest, But with the dying Head?"

Where will our spirits be when we have left the body behind? We do not know much about the unseen world, but we are content with what Richard Baxter sings—

"My knowledge of that life is small,

The eye of faith is dim,

But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,

And I shall be with Him."

Our Savior's words are certainly true, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." Some people are anxious to know more concerning the condition of the redeemed between death and the Resurrection, but, my dear Brothers and Sisters, I am satisfied to know that I shall be with Jesus where He is! I feel like the little child who had been a long while away from its mother and who was told that it should soon go home to her. That was all the child wanted, to be in mother's bosom—and all I want is to be with Jesus. This He has promised us and this is our comfort, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." As soon as ever we fall asleep in Him, absent from the body, we are present with the Lord!

What about the Resurrection? Well, Jesus rose and so, in due time, our bodies shall also rise. These very bodies of ours—for Christ has redeemed not a part of our manhood, but the whole of it—and these bodies of ours are the temple of the Holy Spirit—they shall rise again and in our flesh we shall see God. And so shall we be "forever with the Lord."

But what is Heaven, Brothers and Sisters, and what will eternal Glory be? Although eye has not seen, nor has ear heard, nor heart of man conceived what God has prepared for them that love Him, He has revealed it unto us by His Spirit, at least, in part. But it is enough for us to know that we shall be with Jesus, where He is—that we may behold His Glory. It is wonderful what new discoveries are constantly being made. Many books have come out, lately, filled with what I believe to be nothing but rubbish, but, for my part, I do not care about where I am going to be in the millennium or afterwards, for I know that I shall be with my Lord—and I want nothing else. I do not stipulate for a golden harp, or a place by the sea of glass. I do not ask, even, to be among the angels. I am quite content with my Lord's promise, "Where I am, there shall also My servant be." My Lord and I shall fare alike and it will do for me if it will do for Him! Are you not of the same mind, Beloved, and is not this all you wish to know about the future—that you shall be with Him, where He is, and behold His Glory?

III. Now, thirdly, we have A SENTENCE WHICH IS ALTOGETHER A PROMISE—"If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor."

Brothers and Sisters, if you serve Christ in the way I have feebly tried to describe, that is, by an out-and-out consecration of yourself to Him and to His service, you will not get much honor among men. You know what many want, at the present day, in a minister. He must have no principles at all, or, if he has any, he must keep them to himself and never say anything about them. Above all, he must be perfectly neutral and never say a word against any error. Do you not know that it is uncharitable to attack what others believe? Preach always what everybody would like you to preach. If you see anything wrong, put the telescope up to your blind eye, as Nelson did—then you will find all the brethren will praise you because you praise them! Pat them on the back and they will pat you on the back! And you will get through the world very smoothly. I know that path and I know how many friends we might have if we would but follow it—wriggle in and out and be anything and everything, or nothing—just to suit the tastes of others! Brothers and Sisters, if you believe anything to be true and stick to it, some will call you sectarian and others will be offended with you, but, mark this, if you do not get any praise from men for clinging to the right, you will have an easy conscience! I would sooner have all the demons in Hell enraged against me and all the dogs on earth howling at me, than feel that I had kept back anything I believed to be true!

If we do what our conscience tells us is right. If we serve Christ outright and follow Him fully, God will honor us by setting His seal upon our work. If you preach Christ and not the fancies of men, God will give

you souls, make you useful and help you to build up His people. That is the honor which you will receive. Faithfulness will not be without its reward. "In due season, you shall reap, if you faint not."

Then, by-and-by, it will come to pass that even those who censured you as too strict, too punctilious and, perhaps, litigious, will come round to see that you are truthful and right. And, so, God will give you honor in their sight. It is wonderful how even bad men are compelled to honor consistency and uprightness. They may hate it, but they respect it. Whereas if you do not fully follow Christ and do not act as His servants should, God will not honor you, neither will men do so long, for they will find you out and then they will drive you from them in derision.

The best honor that comes from God will come to His people, by-and-by. I have been thinking over those words, "If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor," and I feel that I cannot preach from them at all. What would some people think if the Queen were to honor them? But what is that compared with our Father, who is in Heaven, honoring us? I do not know whether you can conceive what it means. I cannot. God makes His creature love Him, but for Him to honor that creature—to put honor upon him—is something so amazing that I am lost in contemplation of it! Yet He will do it. If you faithfully serve Jesus Christ on earth, God will bid the angels make way for you in Heaven. While you live here, they will be your servants and when you ascend to Heaven, you shall have a place nearer to the Eternal Throne than even they have. And then, in the presence of all the holy angels, God will do you honor and your spirit shall be known among them as one that God loves. "What shall be done unto the man whom the king delights to honor?" was the question asked of old, but I put another question, "What shall be done unto the man whom the eternal God, the Creator, the Possessor of Heaven and earth, delights to honor?" Do you aspire to that honor? Are you ambitious to share it? Then you have only to do this—serve Christ faithfully, follow Christ fully.

Some of you cannot do this—you who are not renewed in heart and life. I might as well urge the dead to dance as bid you attempt this, for you cannot do it. You must believe in Jesus! You must be born again and receive the new life. But, oh, you who have believed in Him, remember that this is your road to honor—willingness to be dishonored, willingness to be counted as the mud in the street for Christ's sake and for His Truth's sake! Then let this be your strong resolution that come what may, Christ's life shall be your rule—Christ's Word shall be your marching orders and whether you have to die a martyr's death, or not—to Him who loved you and bought you with His blood, you consecrate yourself entirely, henceforth and forever!

May God raise up many who will feel the power of these words! If we only get a few of such men who will follow the Lord fully, happy will be the churches to which they belong, blessed will be the age in which they live, highly privileged will be the land in which they dwell—for such men are God's heroes! These are the soldiers who will stand firm in the day of battle and who will help to save our country from ever becoming Roman Catholic again! May we have many such men and many such women in every age till Jesus comes, and glory dawns! May this be your happy lot, my dear Brothers and Sisters, for Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JOHN 12:20-41.

Our Lord had raised Lazarus from the dead and this miracle had excited great attention in Jerusalem. In consequence of this, the people had led Him in triumph through the streets, and everywhere there was great excitement. Everybody was speaking of the wonderful miracle which He had worked.

Verses 20, 21. And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: the same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. There is no doubt that these men were Gentiles—probably proselytes. They had come up to worship at the feast and their curiosity had been excited and their interest had been awakened by what they had seen and heard about Jesus. There appears to have been at least some measure of reverence for Him in their minds. Hence they addressed one of His disciples, whose purely Greek name may lead us to suppose that he had some Greek relatives. They said to Philip, "Sir, we would see Jesus."

22, 23. Philip came and told Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified. They did not expect Him to say that! Surely, the coming of a few Greeks to see Him was not very much in the way of glorification! But, to Him, the coming of these Greeks was a sort of prophecy of the myriads of other Gentiles who would, by-and-by, come to His feet and, therefore, He looked forward to that death which would be the means of their salvation. Christ came into the world to preach the Gospel, but He came on a greater errand than that, namely, to provide a Gospel that could be preached—and He knew that the time was approaching when He must provide that Gospel by dying upon the Cross. See how He proceeds—

24. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone: but if it dies, it brings forth much fruit. The preservation of the grain is the prevention of its increase, but the putting of it into the ground, the losing of it, the burial of it is the very means of its multiplication. So our Lord Jesus Christ must not care for Himself and He did not. He surrendered Himself to all the ignominy of the death of the Cross. He died and was buried in the heart of the earth but He sprang up again from the grave and, ever since then myriads have come to Him through His death, even as these Greeks came to Him in His life. Now, as it was with Christ, so is it to be with us—at least, in our measure.

25. He that loves his life shall lose it; and he that hates his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. His love is ruinous to his true life, but to destroy self-love, to make a sacrifice of ourselves, is the truest way to really preserve ourselves.

26, 27. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor. Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father save Me from this hour? But for this came I unto this hour. This seems to be a sort of rehearsal of the dread scene soon to be enacted in Gethsemane. At the sight of these Greeks, our Savior seems to have been led especially to think, as we have already said, of that death by which they and multitudes like they, were to be redeemed. Thinking of it, He enters so fully into it, by a sort of foretaste, that He feels something of the same shiver and throes of anguish which came upon Him in Gethsemane. He seems to say here, "Father, save Me from this hour," just as He said there, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me." Yet He says here, "But for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Your name"—just as He afterwards said in the garden, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

28, 29. Father, glorify Your name. Then came there a voice from Heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again. The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said an angel spoke to Him. This was the third time that that mysterious Voice had been heard—first, at His Baptism. The second time on the Mount of Transfiguration. And now a few days before He died upon the Cross. The voice of God had been heard on a much earlier occasion—at Sinai—and then it was attended with thunder, as it was here. Those who had not ears to understand the voice of God only perceived the loudness of its thunder peals. But there were others, like John, who understood what the Lord said—"I

have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."

30, 31. Jesus answered and said, This Voice came not because of Me but for your sakes. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. The old Roman empire seemed to stand as fast as the eternal hills, but God had come to judge the whole state of affairs as it was then in the world and, inasmuch as Christ the pure and

perfect Son of God was condemned to die, that action condemned the society of that period! Yes, the whole of the ungodly world, in taking its part in crucifying Christ, bore evidence against itself and pronounced sentence upon itself as being guilty of the death of the Christ of God. "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out." The overthrow of the usurper began from that time—and that overthrow of the devil is still going on—and, blessed be God, it will reach its completion one of these days and we shall yet rejoice in a new Heaven and a new earth on which the trail of the serpent shall never be traced!

32. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. Christ on the Cross draws all men up to Himself. I have heard this text quoted as if it referred to Christ being extolled in preaching. Well, it is true that when Christ is lifted up in the ministry, there is an attractive power—but that is not the first meaning of the text. Let us read on.

33. This He said, signifying what death He should die. He alluded to His Crucifixion which is the great attractive center of mankind.

34-36. The people answered Him, We have heard out of the Law that Christ abides forever: and how can You say, The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man? Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walks in darkness knows not where he goes. While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light. It is always well to use the Light of God that we already have. If any man will use the Light he already has, God will be sure to give him more. That is a good saying of an old Puritan, "If you have starlight, thank God for it and He will give you moonlight. And when you have moonlight, give thanks to God for it and He will give you sunlight." And so it shall be. Nothing is worse than sinning against the Light of Good. If it is only the light of conscience, even if you know it is not perfect, yet, nevertheless, never sin against it, for, if you do, you will quench it, and to quench the Light you have, is the way to effectually prevent your having any more. "While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light."

36-41. These things spoke Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them. But though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him: that the saying of Isaiah the Prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they could not believe, because that Isaiah said again, He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said Isaiah, when he saw His Glory, and spoke of Him. There is such a thing as judicial blindness. If men can see and yet will not see, God is at last so provoked by their wickedness that He takes away the Light of God altogether and removes from them the very faculty of sight. It is not surprising that it should be so, for it was so with the generation in which Christ lived. They had so long rejected the true Prophet—so long refused to listen to the voice of God, that, at last, He abandoned them to their own ways—and nothing worse can happen to a man than to be abandoned of God! If God casts you off, you are lost indeed.

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