

Sermon preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, by Mr. F. L. Gosden, on
Lord's day morning, Dec. 2, 1961

1031

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Text: John xiii. 1.

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We read in Isaiah, "To this man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word". There is more than one way in which we may tremble at the word of God. We shall be brought to tremble at the word of God, and the Almighty God as we see Him under the solemn light of His holy law. We may tremble too when we read the solemn judgments of God upon the wicked. But I believe that there is such a thing as trembling at the most blessed Scriptures relating to His love to His dear people. This chapter begins - or at least when Judas went out - the discourse that the Lord had with His disciples in comforting them before He left them. When Judas had gone out, the Lord was with His eleven, each of whom were His own for whom He was about to die, having loved them. He had finished with the world and had nothing more to do with the world after this chapter. Chapters 14 to 16 were things that He had spoken, as He declares in summing up: "These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world". So that to enter into these sacred things that belong exclusively to His dear people, does fill us with a kind of blessed sacred trembling.

"Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come." The Lord Jesus, being God, knew everything. We may have some sufferings before us, and we know not what a day may bring forth; but the Lord Jesus knew every step that He took, what was being accomplished by Himself according to the covenant purposes and counsels of God. He even knew, as we read in the 11th verse, who should betray Him. And we read another thing concerning this knowledge of the Lord Jesus. He said when He was upon the cross, "Knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, I thirst". He knew exactly what His work was accomplishing from the manger to the cross. And this also was a sacred knowledge:

"The Saviour knew for whom He died,
And gave Himself a sacrifice".

It is a very sacred consideration, that in Jesus Christ, God in human nature, is all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Though a Man, all divine perfections were in Him. While here below, He was omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, immutable, eternal. He knew. And the great point is this, my friends, and it will be the point upon every approach of the Gospel, that in all God's knowing the great comfort to His people is, that He knows them. We considered lately that prayer of Jeremiah - "O Lord! Thou knowest". It is a tremendous truth. In all the work of salvation, He knew. And when a poor sinner who knows nothing, and is perplexed and knows not how to pray, if by faith he can look up and say, "O Lord! Thou knowest; remember me, and visit me".

"When Jesus knew that His hour was come." There was an hour when He should come into the world, as well as when He should depart from it. "In the fulness of time, God sent forth His Son", to be made under the law. And there was a fulness of time when the Lord Jesus should leave this world, and so we read in the 12th chapter: "Now is My soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour". Almost as though, in view -

for He knew the intense sufferings of His body, the greater sufferings of His holy soul, when the law should curse Him, when His divine and beloved Father should forsake Him, when the pains of hell should get hold upon Him - He says, "Shall I pray to My Father to save Me from this hour? No, no; but for this cause came I unto this hour". "How willing was Jesus to die!"

"When Jesus knew that His hour was come." When He had finished with His disciples, and had spoken to them the most sacred loving things in these three chapters, He turns His eyes another way. Oh that the Holy Spirit would bear in upon our hearts the love of the Lord Jesus as it is set before us in these three chapters! Then having comforted His disciples, He looks another way: "These words spake Jesus and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come". "When Jesus knew that His hour was come when He should depart out of this world unto the Father." There is a very important and sacred connection between His coming into the world and His going out of it. He came into the world to save sinners, and He never went out of it until that work of salvation was complete, and He knew that all things were accomplished. Oh this was a blessed satisfaction in the divine heart of the Lord Jesus! He knew it was accomplished. He knew that He had rendered complete satisfaction to the law in fulfilling it. He knew that there was no jot nor tittle left unfinished in the law. He knew that the life that He lived He had lived as a Substitute for His people. He knew that His redeeming blood had redeemed them. He knew that His grace had saved them. He knew that He had cast up a new and living way unto God for them.

"When Jesus knew that His hour was come, that He should depart out of this world." What a mercy He came into it! The wisdom of God in Christ, that blessed mystery increases in its blessedness as we get older. You think of it, my friends! The Lord Jesus, as the second Person in the glorious Trinity must, according to the covenant of grace in salvation, become Man. Does not there appear to you a glory in it which would far excel salvation, if it could be accomplished from heaven itself without the condescension of God's eternal Son? You look at that point as it may affect you as a poor sinner in the wilderness, and the Lord Jesus became the same. Not a sinner; He came into the wilderness to be made sin. He grappled with those difficulties, temptations, sorrows of His people are acquainted with in all points. He entered into everything that they would enter into. He came into the wilderness.

"That He should depart out of this world unto the Father." I thought of it when you were singing the first hymn (481). Oh that the blessed Spirit would bring this part of the text into our hearts!

"Oh for a sight, a pleasing sight,
Of our Almighty Father's throne;
There sits our Saviour crowned with light,
Clothed in a body like our own."

And also these two lines:

"The God shines gracious through the Man,
And sheds sweet glories on them all".

"When Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father", to be exalted above principalities and powers, to sit at the right hand of God, there to appear before God on

behalf of His dear people. But oh what there was between this word to His disciples and His resurrection! There was the Garden of Gethsemane and Calvary. The 14th chapter concludes: "Arise, let us go hence". What a going hence it was! It was a going hence to Gethsemane, a going to Calvary; and He knew it. How beautifully this love and knowledge of Christ was manifested in the Lord's Supper: "This is My body, which is broken for you"!

"And when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He must depart unto the Father" - and where He is, there shall also His servants be, His people. He is there as the glorious Head of the church. He took human nature that poor men may partake of the divine nature. There could have been no union unto Christ unless He had become incarnate. He brought immortal blessings down, brought salvation down in Himself. Oh my friends, there was more virtue in the blessed Son of God, the virtue of His divine Person united to a sinless sacred humanity, and the life that He lived, the obedience He rendered to the law, the virtue that was in Him is infinitely greater than the demerit, and death, and pollution that there is in sin! Oh what a mercy that the Lord Jesus did come, and that He finished the work His Father gave Him to do, and went again to His Father!

"Having loved His own which were in the world." That was the word that touched my heart. If you leave that part out of the text, you lose a good deal of this manifested love. If we read it like this - "Having loved His own, He loved them unto the end"; but you look at what this means - "Having loved His own which were in the world". He takes this up too in His prayer to His Father: "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".

"Having loved His own." Oh may the Spirit reveal this sacred truth to us! The Lord Jesus has His own people. They belong to Him. How He takes it up in that sacred prayer in the 17th chapter! He says to His divine Father: "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me". The Father chose His elect, and He chose them according to His infinite foreknowledge. Not a foreknowledge of anything commendable in them. No; there is only one thing that will account for the love of the Father to any sinner, and that is His sovereign will. And we can never, and should never attempt to account for anything in salvation other than the sovereign will of Jehovah, and it was that will that the Lord Jesus came to do. And the will of God is concerned in the salvation, justification, and glorification of the whole church.

"Having loved His own." Loved they were from all eternity, before they were born; and yet in the text that love is expressed in a different way. Not a different love. It brings in that clause which to my mind is filled with divine compassion. Having loved His own, not only in the covenant, but which were in the world, in the midst of tribulations, having loved His own as they are struggling through against temptations in a body of sin and death in the world. It reminds me of the Apostle in that beautiful word - oh I have coveted to be inside of it! "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life that I now live in the flesh" - that is the point. Now you look at that, and this of the Lord Jesus, "Having loved His own which were in the world". Said the Apostle, "The life that I

now live in the flesh". He was not in heaven yet. He had to live the life of faith in the midst of the corruptions of the flesh in the wilderness, in the midst of all the evils that abound without and within, all oppositions, conflicts, and trials. And so the Lord says, "Having loved His own which were in the world. Oh there seemed such divine compassion there! And how He prays to His Father, "They are in the world, Father". I come to Thee, but these are in the world still. Keep through Thine own name. I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil." It joins with this of Peter: "Those who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation". They have an inheritance reserved for them, though now for a season, if need be, they are in heaviness. Why? They are in the world, in the wilderness. The life of faith they live is in the flesh in a body of sin and death, and the Lord regards it.

He loved His own which were in the world. There was never a time when He did not love them.

"Loved when a wretch defiled with sin,
At war with heaven, in league with hell,
A slave to every lust obscene,
Who, living, lived but to rebel.

Believer, here thy comfort stands -
From first to last salvation's free;
And everlasting love demands
An everlasting song from thee."

Whatever complaint you may have, there is a remedy in the Gospel. Otherwise the hymn we have sung would have no meaning (731):

"Heal us, Immanuel, here we are,
Waiting to feel Thy touch;
Deep-wounded souls to Thee repair,
And Saviour, we are such".

I wish I could speak of these things as I ought, but every word of this verse is full of instruction. These three words - "When Jesus knew". What a comfort that can be made to a sinner that doesn't know! Some of you just feel you don't know, don't seem to know anything. But Jesus knew, and therefore you come to Him who does know. What a lot the disciples did not know! He said to Peter, "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter", and that applies to everything. Some of you may be in a predicament, entangled and confused, and don't know what to do. But you cannot be in a place but what this will remain true - "Jesus knew". He knew what He would do, we read in another place. When He tested the disciples. There was a multitude. They could not feed them, but He told them to, to test them. But we read, "For Jesus knew Himself what He would do".

"Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." This is immutable love. There was nothing that could either quench this love or divert its course. He will never change His mind. His love will never be diverted from one object to another. Oh the beautiful persuasion Paul had! Oh to have it concerning ourselves, that nothing can separate from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. "He loved them unto the end."

This loving them to the end has various meanings. As for instance, the immediate reference in the text is to the end of His work. He kept

loving them. When for their sakes He was tempted in the desert forty days and nights, He loved them. When He was despised and rejected of men, He loved them. When He was in Gethsemane and was made a curse and cursed of God, He loved them. When their debts were brought to Him - infinite debts, He loved them and paid the debts. "Shocked at the sight, yet prompt to pay." When there was put into His hand that cup filled with the wrath of God and the hell that His people deserved, He loved them unto the end, He drank it up. When He was mocked, and reproached, and spit upon, and smote with a reed, He loved them unto the end. Many waters of affliction and sorrow could not drown love. When He hung upon Calvary's cross parched with thirst, and they offered Him vinegar in mockery, when they taunted Him and said, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save", He loved them. And He loved them to the end when He cried, "It is finished". Oh divine satisfaction! It was, if I might so speak, a sacred divine sigh, the cry of victory, "It is finished, complete". Loved them unto the end.

And not only so, but this. Oh look at it, sinner! May the Holy Ghost bear witness that He has thus loved us to the end of our life. Loved us when we were in a state of rebellion against Him, wandered as far as sheep could roam. Loved His people in all their backslidings. Loved Peter when he was disowning and denying his Lord with oaths and curses; He loved him then. Loved them unto the end. Ah, when some of you look back to see the backslidings, sins, your defeats, your denials of Him, how you have betrayed Him! He loved them unto the end. This is immutable love, love divine.

Well, it is an inadequate and poor word upon a most sacred truth. Oh blessed are they that shall be found inside of it! Solemn beyond contemplation for those who are outside of it! Amen.
