

The Proof of Love to Christ

John 14: 15-23.

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Part Fourth. LATER MINISTRY.

When the first passover was kept, all the principles connected with the transit of Israel out of Egypt, and through the wilderness, were brought to light. God that gave them to them looked forward to their progress; and the Lord Himself, the Paschal Lamb (John 13), set out before the minds of His people how entirely He understood how everything would be secured in His absence, whatever they might be, by the position He would occupy as being the Guardian of His people on high, meeting all the failure of His people on earth. Any one who reads John 13, I think, may well say, "What a wonderful thing!" — not only what the person of the Lord was, being able to look to the end of time, and to embody in a few verses all these great principles; but having the graciousness of heart to put Himself forward, just as now He makes us know that whatever the difficulties until He comes to take us to Himself He charges Himself with every difficulty, and meets it all.

In the first part of chap. 14, He takes higher ground still as the only One that knew all about the Father; and He introduces the Father by mentioning the Father's house, and presenting Himself as the One who had come to guide us into it in the end, and how they who knew Him ought to read the Father in Him. His own self as a Person, all His ways, thoughts, habits, all His mind — the great thing with Him was to present the Father to His disciples. There were the works He had wrought in the name of the Father as Servant, and the words He had spoken, and the love He exhibited in all His course to His children. In that wondrous love of His, He puts forward to the disciples the place they would hold when He had gone on high. That connects itself with testimony. The fulness of His love which knew all the Father's counsels should pray for the Holy Ghost, and all that He had in Himself as Messenger of the Father would become marvellously connected with the believer by the Spirit of truth dwelling in him — He the truth gone on high, the Spirit in them, and the character of their relationship marked in this way as to life: "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father. and ye in me, and I in you." Well, from that verse 20, He shows another very precious thing, that He understood the heart of a child of God, and what would make it happy in the wilderness, and what His position was as a Servant, and presents that as instruction which occupies the latter part of the chapter.

I would like to follow up what I said the other day when speaking on this chapter. Note verses 15 and 21. If ye love me, treasure up my commandments — injunctions. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." "If a man love Me, he will keep (treasure up) My word" (not words): "and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

The Lord was really bringing out the two grand principles of His life when here — thoroughly obedient, perfectly dependent. The difference sometimes escapes notice. Dependence is more than obedience. In Him everything was perfect, and there was the most implicit obedience, so that at the close of His course on the cross, His mind seems to turn to Scripture to see if anything had not been fulfilled, and then He said, "I thirst." The last word that described what the Perfect Servant would do,

meeting the mind of Him whose Servant He was, He gave up the ghost. The spirit of dependence went further. He had the whole heart of the Father fixed on Him when as a Servant of a lower kind, fulfilling His duties as Messiah, King of Israel, He did it in all the savour of His relationship to the Father. We have a striking instance in Gethsemane. "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" Not merely I must obey, but as a Son that had fully entered into the mind of His Father in perfect subjection. Christ was the perfect model of dependence in two ways. One, always seeking solitude in the enjoyment of communion; the other, the word of His Father leading Him to thrust Himself out, and set His face like a flint before the world. If I walk as a son and a servant, I realize the heart of a child. in perfect dependence. I also get the injunction which comes often in a different way.

One remark I would like to make — it often escapes the attention of the children of God — as to the power of the word as received by the person. When God said, "Let there be light," there was light; and every word of God, if I might give it an epithet, I should call creative. When I find the word comes to me, I cannot say "I cannot." God says these things, and as sure as He says it, there is power given to me to do the thing He speaks of. These exhortations scare people, but are entirely met in that way. To the overcoming one Christ says, "He that hath an ear, let him hear," not to him that shall overcome. The person becomes an overcomer. Do not say, I cannot overcome. Has the word come to you? That word brings power with it. Every command comes to irritate the unconverted; but when sheltered in Christ it comes with the power of God, and there is power because God has put it on His own people.

Just see what an appeal there is in these words of Christ. We know He has loved us, and revealed to us that He gave Himself for us; and His own word tells us that, His thought was, that "they which live should not live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again." He says, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Again, "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." It is a great thing to realize that that Christ of God is a living Person in heaven, occupied with the people He has given life to down here, and that having saved us, and given us Himself, bearing all the responsibility in God's presence — that He has given life to *me*, that He has given life to *you*, and it is the desire of His heart that we should recognise His commandments, and live to Him. "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." "If any man love Me, he will keep My words; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." On the ground of that, the heart will be happy all through the wilderness. Do you find your hearts thoroughly happy? if you were to sit down and give an account of last year, has the happiness (I mean the enjoyment of it in your souls) been greater than the sense of difficulties? Which do you find nearest to you, the Lord in His presence, or the difficulties you have to combat and fight with? There is a great deficiency in us in realising the fulfilment of that gracious word of the Lord, spoken in verse 21, and repeated in verses 23 and 24.

This brings up very much the question of Christian experience. People often put experience entirely in the wrong place. There is no experience that I know of preceding the reception of the word of the living God. God and the word of His grace come first. When that has been received, and the Lord is known as a living Person, is there no rich enjoyment in the heart of His love, as we pass along, presented by Christ as that which He thought would make us happy? Abundantly full it is, and however deep the sorrow through which we may be called to pass, I am bold to say that a man full of the Holy Ghost and walking in obedience and dependence, will find the joy preponderate over the affliction. "Our light affliction which is but for a moment." Then you say, "Dear me! I must give up everything if I know this." And what is the everything that you give up? The revelation of God's love does make demand of surrender; but what of that, when I think of what it is to have Christ dwelling in the heart by faith, and the soul passing through the wilderness conscious of His eye on me, His heart with me, and

in the enjoyment of His love?

Let me give another turn to that thought as to the portion that is ours, and the sorrow into which it may lead us. Persons often pity themselves. True Christians waiting for the Lord have a great deal of sorrow they could tell of. Did it ever occur to you to sit down and write out a list of your sorrows, and present them to Him who was the Man of sorrows, and bore them all for your sake? I should be ashamed to do it. I recognize that character of prayer, that it is the gracious intention of the Lord for us to empty out our care before Him, and ask Him for what we need, even when the thing that presses on us may not be His mind to give us. The Lord Jesus knew no place to lay down the weight upon Him but in the presence of the Father. If I knew my place in Him on high, I could not bring my sorrows there to make much of them. I may present them, and am quite free to do it, and think how much deeper sorrow He went through. I am ashamed to speak of myself when He suffered so much for my sake.

He that hath My commandments and treasures them up, keeps them, not obeys them merely. It is a privilege to have a directing word from the Lord — it is commandment, injunction, the steppingstone to put my foot on as I go along. Very precious that word "keepeth," that is what the word is here, it involves distinct obedience. You never treasure up a word from anyone if you do not obey it. The love remains after the opportunity has passed for meeting His mind. "He that loveth Me shall be loved of my Father." You and I ought to be able to say, I love the Lord, and to say it to Himself — not in the coarse way many boast of their love to Him, without seeing what His love has been to them. "We love Him because He first loved us." Peter, when the Lord speaks to him — Peter says first, "I love, yes, I love." Then he says, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." He takes Him on the ground of His divine glory, and the Lord cannot deny that He has given warmth to Peter's heart. Peter could therefore say it, and say it boldly. It is different — the consciousness of love to Christ when in the secret of God's presence, and when in the world. When in the world I say, "They do not know His word, I do; they have no regard for Christ, I have, and am dependent upon Him." The Holy Ghost is given to us (Rom. 5), proved by our obedience to the known will of God, enabling me to find out the things the Lord would have me to do, and behind which the word stands. I am one of His body, and have to do these things expressive of my obedience to Him.

"He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him." It is the display of personal affection in the family, not salvation here. What a need there is, when you look at religion and Christianity in our day, of the family affection and ties of the children of God being restored to the soul. It is not a question with you or me whether we are saved, but if we are children of the Father. If Christ the first-born among many brethren is in heaven, we want so to walk that the love of the Father may flow toward us, and be free to flow toward us. If we walk contrary to Him, it will stop the expression of His mind, because the child is in the house, belonging to the house, and in the room with the parent, subjecting the child to the parent. "If a man love Me he will keep My words, and My Father will love him." And what has the Father seen me do today? And what was His thought? That I was very good? Oh, no! but that grace had given me the perception to carry out the mind of the Father. "Shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." Practically I find that this is connected with that simple truth — the effect of the word of Christ dwelling in my heart is to cast light on my circumstances. The word treasured up and kept. it makes all the difference if you have a week's difficulty before you, and you have no word that connects itself with you. You will be exercised, and fretted, and distracted; and perhaps a Christian of less power will be in the circumstances in a different way, finding this word and that word to throw such light upon them that it changes the bearing of them all, making the sorrow turn to testimony that he is the Lord's. The very darts that the wicked one uses to harass me, make me a testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ. You cannot correct yourself with the

apostle's doctrine save by the word dwelling in you. I do not believe we are so taught in the word as a practical thing to ourselves as to be able to read new discipline by the word of Christ treasured up by us.

Well, as to this question of manifestation, the Lord knew what He was saying — how He could let a ray of light shine down to Saul of Tarsus; and how now, if we are dependent and obedient, He can communicate the sense of His presence. Judas says, "How is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" and the Lord repeats, "If a man love Me, he will treasure up My word." Aye, that is much larger than commandment. How many a bright thought the Son had of the Father down here. "Commandment" is, Do you do this; be the doers and workers in a certain path. The "word" is the expression of the mind of the perfect Servant.

"If a man love Me." And do you love the Lord Jesus Christ? Can you face that word, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha" — cursed for eternity? Do you love Him? The simple heart that believes says, "Oh yes;" and not boasting as though it was the expression of goodness in itself. Have I been forty-eight years under the tender guardian care of the Lord Jesus Christ, such a One as He is, and have I not learned His love and enjoyed it — the pure out-breathing of love divine to those without strength and ungodly?

He lays it home in a blessed way; "We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Really there is no difficulty in making a soul conscious of His presence. And have I got it practically? Is the Spirit ungrieved in me? Does the word so dwell in me that there is the consciousness of the nearness of Abba, and of Christ Himself with me in the wilderness? And here, in verse 24, He puts it forward as Abba's word. As the only-begotten Son He had Abba's word with Him; as the perfect Servant He had what was written in the book. He knew what a Son's heart was, and what a Servant's. Abba's word is what He gives us as our fare down here. He could not have been here save as knowing the Father. He had something to do for the Father down here. It was His stay and support, Abba's love and Abba's word; because a Son, therefore a Servant. Satan is god of this world. What have I to do with the world? Serve God in it surely; but the world is not my portion.

"These things I have spoken unto you, being yet present with you: but the Comforter (Paraclete), which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." No doubt this had weight with the apostles. The word of God is known by reading it in the book; it is what is written. The Lord says, "If you do not attend to Moses, how can you listen to My word?" I should have been inclined to put it the other way, and say, "You do not attend to Moses because you do not attend to the Lord;" but He says otherwise, showing what Scripture is to the mind of Christ. It is the great difference in persons reading the word. If one is dependent on the Lord, he counts on the Spirit to give him power to use Scripture, and to bring Scripture to his mind when conversing with others. The Spirit guides the child of God as to the use of the word and as to his own heart too. I get fellowship with the Lord, the only-begotten Son. I am a son, therefore a servant, and treasure up the word; and the Lord sets His seal to it by letting His countenance shine on the person.

"Let not your heart be troubled." You must judge. Not as the world giveth give I unto you." The world gives after a fashion; it can only give part. When He makes His peace our portion it is another thing. In Philippians the apostle talks of the peace of God keeping, and the God of peace being with him. Christ had perfect peace, conscious He was the doer of the word, — just what a believer understands. It is very simple; in time of trial the mind will let everything pass except something about Christ which sets us in heart before God. "The peace of God." I do not limit it to peace of soul; it is

peace for all varieties of circumstances. Christ is the peace. "My peace I give unto you." It is what you must learn. A "babe" only learns in small measure, "young men" will learn it more largely, and the "fathers" still more deeply. Each has to *learn* it. Are you skilful in it? How long have you been happy in Christ? and are you skilful in this, carrying perfect peace through all your circumstances? Have you known how to carry the vessel with this peace in it? I believe we have great cause for shame as to what is practical in this respect. The heart of the Lord seeks to have us thoroughly good soldiers. We are not skilful in this inward life, and so the outward life is not to the praise and glory of God as it might be. What a thought, that the Lord in heaven, if He looks on such as you, seeing every trouble round about you — what a thought in His heart that He should be your peace! Is it really true that Christ, the Lord of glory that spoke that word, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever, is there in heaven, His eye on the heart? And that such a word as verse 27 is made good to His disciples? He is going away, and puts it before them, challenges the heart's affections to Himself, "If ye loved me ye would rejoice." The principle is, that Christ cares for my entering into His joys. Can I do it? Have I done it? Did ever such a thought cross my mind, and rest upon my heart, "I am in the field of battle (and a great deal of battle goes on within me), but the Lord that has loved me — He, thank God, is at rest upon the throne." The question is, whether I have any power in entering into this thought at the present time. Let me take a very simple figure. If there were a tempest, and a sailor out in it, if he knew his wife and child were safe at home, he would have a thought of thankfulness, "They are safe. I may be exposed to all these difficulties, but the objects of my affection are safe." It is just the same with the blessed Lord. I could not in nature rise up to Christ's joy, but having the Spirit I can. The blessed thing is that Christ cares for it.

"And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe." When I am gone you will have this mark of confidence. "Hereafter I will not talk much with you." He was restrained, because the prince of this world was coming, and all He had to do was to go to the Father.

I ask and entreat you to look and to see, whether in the present time, when through mercy, page upon page of Scripture has been brought out before us, whether we are walking in the power of the truth to the eye of God, to the eye of the Father who loved us, to the eye of Christ who cares about the state of our affections and of our thoughts. He is large-hearted enough to take notice of everything in each one of us; and He desires that we should be practically consistent, since we are sons, and therefore servants of God.