

"Rivers of living water."

John 7: 1-39.

Lecture 3 of 'The New Testament Doctrine of the Holy Spirit.'

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Rouse 1906.

Our subject of tonight cannot be severed from what we have had in previous chapters, from the whole of the circumstances in this chapter, and above all from the manner in which our Lord here comes into view. Indeed this is the secret of anything like an assured knowledge of the divine truth. It is not given us formally, but lovingly; it forms a part of those revelations of God, not to speak of the steps of His ways, which have Christ as the one great object before them, at least before Him. God would make everything to be for Christ; and where the soul is by His grace rendered simple, — not forcing truth, not taking it out of its own station in the divine route, not severing what God causes to flow from Christ and to exist for His own glory in Him. The progress may seem some what slower, but in truth there is no progress otherwise. How and whence can there be solid blessing for the soul unless it be thus gathered from God? And not only this, but God's objects are kept before our eyes. Thus the truth is not only divinely received, instead of acquiring knowledge after a human sort, but our hearts are formed according to the scope of His word, and we are brought thereby into the current of God's aims and purposes. If we thus look at the chapter read, we soon discern that our Lord's declaration about the Holy Ghost has a character entirely different from that which has been already examined in chapters 3 and 4 of this gospel. There is an evident advance, and this, as always, is associated with the unfolding of Christ. I do not doubt that, as God reveals more and more of Him, there is a corresponding progress in the heart's acquaintance with Him, and there is a proportionate increase of strength ministered by the word of God. First of all we had that which is necessarily foundation truth as to this subject; and this both in what is common to all saints of all times, and in what is a revealed peculiarity since Christ — common as to the great substance of it, peculiar as to the form which the blessing assumes now that God has revealed His Son.

This foundation was laid in John 3; and here I must briefly call attention to the evidently and perfectly beautiful order of the gospel; for we have Christ, the Word, traced from eternity, wherein He was alone with God, down to the kingdom — the full manifestation not only of His personal glory, and this in relation to man and saints as well as God, but also its display in this world, and the effect of this display upon souls pursued down the stream of time to the millennial period, when He shall both diffuse joy by His own power where emptiness and dearth had been, and clear away all that which is offensive to God by the judgment He will personally take in hand, where man had defamed and perverted the house of His Father, even at Jerusalem.

This it is plain brings us down regularly to the kingdom in which Christ will establish God's glory here below. Then comes the question, How is a soul of man to have part in this kingdom of God? The third chapter of John meets this great question, and accounts also for the fact, that all through God had those He was preparing to have part in the kingdom that was coming. Having shown this, He also discloses the specially blessed form which the impartation of this nature assumes when He Himself, the Son of God, is revealed. There is no divine attribute or mercy to us that does not shine with increased lustre when Christ appears. Being the true light, whatever might be the blessings tasted

before, as I need not say there were many, still let those blessings only come within the range of the light of Christ — and which of them does not present itself as an entirely new thing? — so rich, so sweet, so blessed is the new texture and shape with which He clothes all, even though it may have been substantially true before. All the saints of God, from first to last, were necessarily partakers of a new and divine nature, capable of fellowship with God: now they know it to be eternal life, their actual portion, in His Son.

But this is far from all our portion even now; for, as we saw in John 4, the humbled Son of God (in the hour that was coming and now is) gives the Holy Ghost — not a new birth as born of Him, but Himself — to be in us a power of fellowship with the Father and the Son. Christ was the promised One, but they would not have Him. The consequence is, that even promises, however blessed, give place to the revelations of the deep eternal glory of His person. Consequently, rejected though He be in a lower glory, the only effect is to bring out the higher glory — I may say all the glory of the Son of God, but of the Son of God revealed in perfect grace upon the earth. Hence, not sought out by some great Jewish doctor, but Himself meeting with a poor worthless woman of Samaria, the Lord leads into the wondrous grace and truth of the Holy Ghost, as given by Him, that the believer even now may have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. The new birth in God's mercy had always been true, and must ever be true, so long as He calls out souls; because man is a sinner dead and unclean, by his very nature incapable of inheriting the kingdom of God. But now we have a transcendent privilege over and above that kingdom, and awaiting nothing whatever. And the reason is manifestly because the Son of God was there, and rejected of Israel, God would put honour on Him: everything must bow to His Son; nothing could be too good for Him to bestow. The Son of God coming in grace and humiliation, was only so much the stronger reason why it should be, and forthwith. Hence the heart enters by the perception of the Son's glory into a taste of the Father's love in the power of the Holy Ghost, whom Jesus gives as the revealer of all that love and glory.

Accordingly this inestimable boon is the real spring of proper Christian worship, which displaces the old things ordained previously of God, as well as, of course, the will-worship of men.

Now we enter on another topic. The Lord Jesus is shown us here walking no more in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him. It is not merely that the leaders were jealous of Him, but now the people even — at least the people in Judea proper, for they are clearly meant. Their hatred was complete: only they lacked opportunity. They would be satisfied with nothing short of extinguishing this light of God as far as *they* could. But with the feast of tabernacles just at hand, His brethren call on Him to go into Judea, that His disciples also might see the works that He was doing. The Lord had been gradually driven away from the place of honour, of antiquity, of everything that boasted itself in religion. His works were now mainly in Galilee. His brethren were dissatisfied. They would gladly gain renown by the Lord Jesus; they wished to profit by His mighty deeds for this world. No man that did what He did but must seek, as they supposed, to do it openly. "If thou doest these things, show thyself to the world." It was man's thought; and so much the worse, because it came from the lips and heart of the brethren of Jesus after the flesh.

But what had our Lord just shown in the chapter before? He had struck at the root of all such expectations; for the multitude had then wished to make Him a king. They had reaped present relief by the Lord, who had made them bread; and this had reminded them, it may be, for the Jews often spoke of these things, of the expectation of the Messiah according to Psalm 132. They wished to hurry on the kingdom; for surely here was the King. Our Lord absolutely refuses; and when the people still persist in addressing themselves to Him, He takes advantage of the miracle He had wrought, to point out to them the real object of His mission, which, in this gospel, is never the hope or thought of His

being received as Christ. Of course, it was known to God from the beginning, that the Jews would reject the Messiah; and so even the prophets foretold clearly and fully. The offer was made, and man was put to the proof; and in his failure God did not fail to work greater things. It was not that He did not give the amplest evidence of His Messiahship, but the gospel of John looks at Him according to the divine nature and His everlasting personal glory. He was a rejected one. Deeper counsels were in accomplishment then, even redemption by His blood.

Man understands not, cannot and will not learn, if One were on earth who is really the King, if this was the land, and they the people, that anything could be wanting. These surely are the elements for all that is good — the true King, the real people, the actual land — if it be a question of all the circumstances. But how comes this? God is not in their thoughts; sin is unjudged before Him. Contrariwise, Jesus only sought the will and glory of Him that sent Him. Therefore the kingdom now would have been an utter offence to Him. The kingdom with man in sin? with God's glory unvindicated? Impossible that Jesus should take such a kingdom! And therefore it is that the very point of our Lord's discourse was this — that instead of rising up to take the kingdom, He came down to do the will of Him that sent Him; and this will is to save — to receive whoever came, no matter how repulsive he might be to Himself. For He came not to seek His own will, or to choose any persons who might be agreeable to Himself. It was a question of eternal life now, and resurrection at the last day. When men were startled at these wonderful truths, He brings out a still deeper one — He was come to *die*. He came to give His life for the world, as He says. And more than that, — except they eat His flesh, and drink His blood, there would be no life in them. Thus it is the substitution of a descended and suffering Son of man for the expectations of a king, to bring in ease, plenty, and enjoyment here.

Observe that in John 5 He is the Son of God as working in communion with the Father, and so giving life. If people do not receive Him, they shall be judged by Him; for He is also the Son of man, to whom the Father commits all judgment. In John 6 a yet deeper thing appears. It is not the Son of man judging, but the Son of man coming to die, giving His flesh to be eaten, and His blood to be drunk. There is nothing so blessed, so truly disclosing what God is, what Christ is, in perfect self-abnegation, and in a love that proved itself divine even while He was most evidently man. Who else came to die? All the long-looked-for royal glory of the Messiah fades, and is completely put aside for death; and this because, first of all, God must be magnified, sin judged, man blest perfectly according to God, even now entering into communion with God's mind about the whole scene, communion with Christ Himself in His self-renouncing love and devotedness. This, I suppose, is what is meant by eating His flesh, and drinking His blood. It is not merely that He dies as an offering for them; there is more than that. There is communion with His death; there is entrance by faith into the death it writes on the whole scene, and even the promised glory of the Messiah for the time is eclipsed. I do not in the least deny that by-and-by He will take that glory and reign. Of course we all know, this is but deferred, and that Jesus will take it after even a more blessed sort, and founded on an immutable basis; but it is plain that, for the present, death is what was before Jesus, and this, with its results, He lays before the listening people.

His death having been thus brought in as the Son of man, and this, too, as the ground of communion with His own now — for they must eat His flesh, and drink His blood, or otherwise they have no life in them — we find in the next chapter (John 7) the feast of tabernacles, which typified the sure prospect of glory according to the promise of God.

The brethren of the Lord, then, pressed His manifestation of Himself. Surely, thought they, now is the time! The Lord declares the solemn truth, that their time is always ready. They were of the

world; they spoke of the world, and the world heard them. But as for Him, His time was not yet come. Oh, beloved brethren, when we think for a moment Who it was that uttered these words, when we remember that it was One who had made the whole scene, the rightful Heir of all promises, who was entitled to take all, to enter upon all, to enjoy all, what infinite grace is such language as this, "My time is not yet come"! At the same time, what condemnation of the sinner in "your time is always ready"! what sentence of death on all the thoughts of man! Man's time is the present — is therefore always ready. This is his one thought; for he loves to magnify himself. This is the life he lives in; this the spring of all his activities. What makes the Lord's way to be the more blessed is, that there was no question of power in Him. His brethren, as we are told, did not believe in Him; but they were assured enough of His power. Not believing does not mean that they doubted His ability. Believing is not the same thing as confidence in His capacity to do what He pleased; but not believing was betrayed in there being no sense of what was due to God, no apprehension of His glory, no just judgment of man's estate, no perception of grace in Christ, no feeling of the contradiction of all that was around to Jesus Himself. But He who had all the requisite power, who in an instant could have changed the face of things, awaits the right hour. His time was not yet fully come.

The brethren go up to the feast, and there we find the thoughts of men reveal themselves as to Jesus; and the Jews exposed their unbelief even as His brethren had done before. They murmur, they reason; but it was only the thoughts of men; it was only the dreams of those who were without conscience toward God. Man's mind never reaches up to God's love. Human ideas are human ideas and nothing else. There is no force in them; they are as powerless as the being from whom they spring, and they bear the stamp of death and of lovelessness upon them. But in Jesus it was not so. Power there was, we know, but there was what I dare to say was incomparably more blessed than power; He was divine in His love. He came, already tasting in spirit that utter humiliation that was before Him; and when men sought to kill Him, assuredly He was not without deep reflections of what He was about to encounter and endure. A single eye sees clear. What was withholden from His gaze? It was not unpondered, still less was it unlooked for; but for all that Jesus hastens it not. There was calm waiting on God; there was nothing like rushing into the scene alike of danger to Him, of sin against, and of man's ruin; there was no despising what the world was going to do; for, alas! indeed, it was Satan's short-sighted success and man's own most destructive folly, supposing that the One was thus got rid of who troubled all here below. But love, God Himself who is love, was in all His thoughts, in all His feelings. Accordingly Jesus waits till the feast was begun; and when they were fairly keeping it, He goes up and presents Himself there, cost what it might

First of all He announces that He was about to depart. Let me call your attention to this; for it is of all importance as a basis for the action of the Holy Ghost, of which I am about to speak tonight. The gift in question supposed the death and departure of Jesus; it supposes that He was going where man could not follow, where the Jews must be left entirely behind. In the last day, accordingly, the great day of this feast, itself the last feast of the Jewish year, Jesus stood and cried, etc.

Now let us reflect for a moment what this feast meant. It was that which was kept, as most of us know, in remembrance of the fact, that the people of God, having once been in the wilderness, were now gathered into the pleasant land. It was celebrated after the harvest and the vintage — the well-known signs in prophetic Scripture of the execution of God's judgment in both its forms. There is a judgment that first decides between the good and the bad; and this is the harvest. Next, there is a judgment that falls unsparingly on what is altogether evil and hostile to God; and such is the vintage. God thus always kept before His people an intimation when, or at least how, they were to expect deliverance. It was a vain thought to look for present glory according to God before judgment was

executed. Judgment must have its full course, and glory afterwards fills the scene. But this feast, as we know, was not like an ordinary one of Israel; it had this extraordinary trait, that it was not bounded by seven days even, or that which sets forth the course of earthly time. There was a supernumerary day. There was not only the full week, that shows the ordinary cycle of human events, and even that blessed time of rest at the end, to which, according to the word of God, His counsels for His people and the earth turn. For God never gives up from His mind and purpose the rest that remains for the people of God. But it was not, in fact, on the seventh day, but the eighth, that Jesus took His stand. This was the day not of creation goodness, but of resurrection glory. On that day, then, Jesus stood and cried, saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

Nothing can be more evident to a spiritual mind than the force of all this, which I have been endeavouring to present just as it comes before us in the chapter. Clearly it is not the Spirit of God, as He always wrought on souls even before Jesus came; neither is it the Holy Ghost given as power of communion with Jesus when He is come as the Son of God. Here we have an hour that was not come, nor could come, till Jesus went away. Here we have a blessing that is not in any possible degree or form enjoyed by a human heart till the Lord Jesus died; nay, till He rose and went up into glory. But the point that our Lord is here bringing out so forcibly and with such astonishing wisdom in all the circumstances of the chapter is this, — that the glory of Jesus at once — not the kingdom as yet, but while He is on high — brings into the scene the Holy Ghost given here below as all-overcoming and overflowing streams of blessing now conferred on him that believes. It is not what we have had already, but different from that. And no wonder; for what does God feel and do about the death of Jesus? What sign, what worthy token does He give of the value of that unfathomable humiliation to which His Son went down?

The grace of the Son delighted to give freely the Holy Ghost to the believer, in order that he should enjoy communion with the Father and the Son who gave Himself. Who otherwise could taste or in the least enter into the love, and delight in the dignity of His person? It would be to put ourselves upon a par with Him, could we pretend to have communion with the Son by anything that pertains to us; for even a new nature would not suffice. The Holy Ghost is the only adequate power, as we have already seen.

But here it is not in the quality of Son of God, but distinctively and emphatically as Son of man — as One who has been rejected to the uttermost — as One who died, rose, and was glorified in heaven. All this, mark, is when the judgment is not yet executed; not a blow fallen on man; not a single act of God in the way either of separating the good to Himself while leaving the rest, or of pouring out unsparing vengeance on what was religiously hateful to Him. Before any of these judicial dealings on God's part, the Son of man departs from the world, leaving it entirely undisturbed; goes up into heaven, and from the heaven into which He has gone sends down the Holy Ghost to be a divine link between him who believes upon earth and Himself, that glorified man at the right hand of God. Thus, it is now the joy of the heart, by the power of the Holy Ghost, triumphing in the exalted Saviour, and then testifying far and wide. There is the One that I possess, and know to be my life. To purchase and cleanse me He died. He has now broken with this scene, having been rejected by the very people who ought to have received Him. The earthly promises have lapsed entirely for the time, though their centre and object and founder awaits another day to establish them gloriously; for nothing ever changes or fails that God is pledged to, though as far as man is concerned, all for the present is ruined in His cross. But God only uses the interval to bring forward an incomparably higher thing. Instead of the Christ, yea, instead of the Son of man, bringing in His universal reign — instead of any other glory connected with the earth, there is a new order of things for which man is totally unprepared. While I

am on earth — and how blessed this is! — He sends down the Holy Ghost from Himself in glory, that I may be acquainted, as it were, with the scene into which I am going; that I may be habituated to it while I am on earth; that I may have the Holy Ghost, who knows it so well; that I may have Him linking up every interest, every affection, every thought and expectation of my heart with Him who is there.

This is what the Lord Jesus sets before us in this passage: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst." No matter what is to follow for others, He begins with the reality of man's need for himself. In the things of God, what is more ruinous than theory? It is of all importance to beware of a mere plan or system of truth. We have souls, not minds only, though, when we have been brought to God in truth of heart, I admit that we may enter and delight in the precious things of God. But there must be reality — "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink." It supposes that man begins, as he ought, at the beginning of his soul's destitution according to what God sees him to be, who surely gives him in Christ the answer to his real wants; for if He produces a sense of the wants, it is for the express purpose of satisfying them in His own grace. "Let him come unto me," says Christ, "and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." Thus the thirsty soul does drink; and there is the heart's satisfaction in that which the Holy Ghost ministers. But it does not rest there, and for this simple reason, — the humbled One that died in rejection, but in atonement, was now risen from the dead and glorified in heaven, whence is He the source of power — power of the Spirit — that carries, as it were, all before it. It may be a barren and miserable wilderness. This but enhances the wonder of it. The scene is not changed. The world, far from being made better, is manifest and judged in its true character as it never was judged before. The evil of man here below remains; the hostility of the world to God is unchanged; the total absence of one feeling in unison with God had been fully proved in the death of Christ. Yet, in the midst of such a state, the Holy Ghost is given, not only as a well of water for the believer himself, but as rivers of living water for others all around. How blessed are God's ways and words! How worthily of Himself He meets the evil of the world, and the apparent triumph of Satan! The enemy is never more thoroughly defeated than when he seems to have it all his own way. The downfall of the Son of man, as it seemed to His enemies, was just the path in which He would finish the work of redemption, and, founded upon it, would enter into a new scene, from which He would give the believer present association with Himself, by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and issuing in streams of refreshment for this dreary desert world.

Let me impress some serious questions on the souls that are here this night. How is it that Jesus appears to you, and how is it that you are related to Him, now that He is in heaven? Have you simply a hope that you are going to be there? This to the believer is a hope, and as blessed as it is sure; and more than this, — we shall be with Him for ever. But is there only a hope? Is there nothing now for the heart? Is there no present power linking us with Jesus where He is? This seems to me what our Lord was here making known to His own. Jesus would not have us simply yearning for the day of glory; He would even now give our hearts the taste of it; He would even now make the strength and the joy of it our own; He would even now carry us out through this world as those who are not receivers but givers, and givers according to God's richest mercy; for such it really is. These believers, who had come to Him in their deepest distress, who had drunk where all was utter weariness and want before, find that although He is gone, although disappeared from the earth, He has left them rich indeed, beyond all thought of man heretofore, though in outward circumstances more exposed and desolate than ever. Thus all the portion stands in the clearest contrast with that which even saints or prophets knew or looked for here below. Take, for instance, those in Old Testament times, and how sharp and decisive the lines of divergence. Look at the yearnings of heart in the Psalms; search into

the prophecies of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, or any other: is this their state? Why not? Not that they were not blest; not that they lacked honour from God, some of them being the vessels, as we know, even of inspiration itself. Yet for all that, when their actual experience is looked at, these saints of God, with bright visions of the future, had for the present no such power either of worship or of testimony.

I do not mean to say that the Christian does not know deeper sorrows now than ever an Ezekiel or a Jeremiah knew. I am far from saying that Christ, the great sorrower and sufferer, spares us communion with Himself; for I am sure He does not; nor would our hearts desire to lose the communion of whatever of His temptations our little hearts are able to bear. But of this be assured, that the deepest enjoyment of Christ, and of our union with Him, goes along with the deepening of the world's rejection of God's people, along with our being thoroughly cast out as evil, scorned as men never were of old; for nothing that assailed a Jew is to be compared with that which comes upon a Christian. And the most painful part of it is, that the more one drinks into the place of a Christian — that is, really, the place of Christ; for it is the Holy Ghost associating us with Christ which is the whole matter of Christianity — the more a soul by the power of the Spirit enters into his place with Christ, the more thoroughly is he despised by this world. But then what glory, joy, and blessedness!

How is it that Christians are often cast down? I mean not so much pressed sore because of the toils, and the sorrows, and the griefs of the way, but downcast in heart as before God in their thoughts of the Lord, and forgetful of their associations with heaven. Why is there a cloud, a dimness, a want of the full and fresh joy of Him they belong to, and where they belong to, filling the heart? It is precisely because they fail to look up now into heaven by the Spirit, and so fail to look down on the world as a wilderness, however much the streams of living water may flow through them. They forget what Jesus has given them; they look on earth as a desirable place. Why should not Christ be exalted here? Why should not He and we have a name of glory here now? Not so: His hour is not yet come; nor is ours either; for we are one with Him. Here man's hour was to Him scorn, rejection, and death. This was His place. Ours, too, is to be nothing here; it is to be utterly despised now, and hated of men. This was Christ's lot on earth. Is there anything better in this world? Is there any even to compare with what Christ Himself had? He knew it as none ever can; but at least we may by His own grace be attached and cleave to Him, and so be drawn into and appreciate it in our small measure.

For this seems to be just what the Holy Ghost is here given for. Observe in this connection the expression, "Rivers of living water." The power of the Holy Ghost fills the heart with the glory into which Christ is gone. What can more precisely suit the wilderness when the wilderness proves most arid? When all around is utter barrenness, and there is not a single creature well of water to draw from, not a green spot to refresh the eye, not a palm-tree to find the least rest under? When a true sense of the desolation here below has entered into the heart, this is what fits and strengthens the soul according to God. Therefore do I raise the question, If in John 4 we have the Holy Ghost associating the believer with the Son and with the Father, which thus carries him into worship, what is the new and special blessing here promised? Undoubtedly it is connected more with service than with worship. "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," is suggestive rather of that which goes out abundantly; but assuredly it does suppose the believer by grace in an absolute superiority to the wilderness through which he is passing. There is a communicating power to others from that Spirit, who fills himself intimately with One who is Himself in rest, and gives His rest to the heart, making heaven to be a home very near, into which grace has given him the *entrée* because of Christ who is there. Thus the Holy Ghost so knits him now with the Lord Jesus, that all this world has to offer is but the vainest bauble. There is also the consciousness, on the other hand, of riches which man's heart cannot conceive, and which, if we know them to be ours, we know all to be the fruit of nothing but our

Saviour's grace to us. In short, what we have here is not so much the Spirit of the Son leading us to delight in His person and grace, as well as in the Father's love, but rather the power of the Holy Ghost imparted by the Man who is exalted into God's glory, giving our own souls the consciousness of that glory as ours in Him, and filling us to overflowing in communications of Him to others here below.

This may remind one a little of the difference (though it be another subject, no doubt,) between "the holy priesthood" and "the royal priesthood" in 1 Peter 2. Let us refer to it for a moment, in order to make the point before us a little more sensible. The apostle Peter speaks of us there as invested with this double priesthood. Surely it is not a needless repetition in any respect. There is no vague heaping up of epithets, but rather a distinct perception of our place as brought nigh to God. What, then, is the function of the "holy priesthood"? Offering up spiritual sacrifices. As so consecrated one draws near to God, and accordingly we then hear of these sacrifices in relation to Him. But, on the other hand, we are also said to be a kingly priesthood; and there the object is no longer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, but to set forth the excellencies or virtues of Him that has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. Thus the one exercises itself in our praising God through our Lord Jesus; the other sets forth His worth among men, as One who has dealt with us after a sort which God alone could plan or effect. This conscious dignity the Christian does well to have before him ever in this world. To seek earthly glory is, in fact, the real degradation of a Christian.

Unquestionably many a Christian is called to pass through this world, earning bread for himself and his family. And it is well that it should be so. Few of us can bear not to be occupied thus. Nor is there any reason why our blessed Lord should not be served thus with all the heart, why there should not be a true and energetic and affectionate service rendered to His name, while the hands thus provide (whether for the family or for individual need) what little is required here below. But then the believer does it simply as a bread-trade — nothing more. The moment you give it the dignity of a profession, and regard it as something of honour in the world, you are lost to the testimony of Christ on high. I do not deny that the grace of God may call persons actively engaged in that which is highly esteemed among men. You have known, of course, of men thus called of God, while they were entering on or engaged in that which the natural heart values. And you may have seen some under such circumstances exhibit very great simplicity there. I am not saying now that it is wrong to have what men call a profession; I am using the heavenly glory of Christ to judge the spirit in which all that is in the world is ordered; and I do warn you against the vain-glory of men in these things — the desire and hankering after earthly distinction, the valuing of things for self and family — carried away in our thoughts and feelings by that which the world thinks of them.

As Christ's hour was not yet come, so neither is ours. If we are His, we have nothing to do with anything, even the pettiest shred, of this world's glory. Be assured, it is only a patch of dishonour for the child of God now. It matters little what the world's prize may be. Why should we want it? Are not all things ours? Shall we not judge the world — aye, angels? I do not dwell on the fact, that these present objects so often bear the very stamp of their own insignificance and worthlessness upon them, that their sages confess that the good is in the chase, not in the game. Who does not know that even a "ribbon" is enough reward for some men's life-long exertions! These otherwise are sensible men. What would not the richest and noblest do or endure for a "garter"?

Suffer me, then, to press the importance to the Christian of watching against the world, and of looking to Christ on high, in taking up whatever he does, whether for himself or for his children. I do not mean anything so preposterous as that Christianity calls on all believers to seek one dead level of occupation, or that there is any faith in one's abandoning the circumstances in which one is called, if one can abide therein with God, or in seeking an occupation that is entirely unsuitable. This I do not

call faith but folly. But giving full weight to all this, let me press, that if anything, no matter what it may be, is to be done day by day, whether it be making a shoe, or making a deed, there is but one worthy motive for the Christian — doing all to the Lord. If assured that we are doing His will, we can do either the one or the other with a good conscience and a happy heart. The ruinous thing for the Christian is to forget that we are here to do God's will, and to be witnesses of a rejected Christ glorified in heaven.

But what is the world's greatest desire? Pushing forward, doing something great; and what we to-day achieve made a stepping-stone for something more to-morrow. All this is thoroughly a denial of the Christian's place, and proves that the heart's desire is in the current of the world. It may be natural for a man to wish to be something easier and greater in the earth; but, beloved, where is the heart's allegiance to Christ? Is it so, that after all one prefers the first Adam to Christ? This is really the question:

"Do I value most the first Adam or the Second?" If my heart is given to the Second man, am I not to prove it in what I do every day? Is the honour of Christ only for the Sunday? Surely this is not fealty to our Chief! Have you then been called by the grace of God to have His Son revealed in you while in a position which the world counts mean and dishonourable? Be it so. What more admirable opportunity for the faith which judges by Christ in glory whether you can thus abide with God? I do not ask you to follow this man or that, but to search the word of God, and judge how far in your position you can honour Christ as He is. For are we not to be His epistle, known and read of all men? Is it not thus that the rivers of living water flow from Him out of us? Believe me, there is nothing of Christ in clutching what one has got, upholding one's rights and dignities, even if ever so real in the world's eyes, and resenting every inroad and liberty, in an age which slights authority. Quite as little of Christ is there in him of low degree, who keenly seizes opportunities to urge his way steadily forward to what he values in this world. On the other hand, whether you are high or low, as men speak, you have an opportunity of approving what you think of Christ. Whatever the trial may be, it is but a little offering to show what Christ is in our eyes.

But for guidance there is no criterion but God's word. Vain and foolish is our wisdom in such things: it is a question of the will of the Lord. Everything turns upon this. The whole matter for Christian conscience, no matter what the position of the believer may be, comes to this, that each of us has an opportunity of doing His will, of being His servant, of showing that we value Him infinitely above the world. My blessing is, no matter what the Lord gives me to do, therein to be content. Of the circumstances which are best for His glory, and for me His servant here below, He is the only good judge. Let me value them simply as an opportunity of setting forth His praise, prizing most of all what the world hates. As to any occupation, I must repeat, that high or low in men's eyes, it should be in mine nothing but a bread-trade. Undoubtedly the world dislikes this. What! an honourable profession only a bread-trade? Exactly so; a crucified Saviour now in glory makes short work of the world and all that is in it. Take an example. I am going to work as a shoemaker. Is it my aim to be the best shoemaker in London? Suppose me a doctor: do I covet the largest practice in this city? Is there anything of Christ in these wishes? Is this practically to own the glorified Jesus? Am I really taking up my work from Him and doing it for Him? Our hearts know well, if the Lord actually gave us anything to do for Him, how love would express itself in doing the work well. Far be the thought that Christians should count it a virtue to be loose and negligent in the way they discharge their business! Certainly there is nothing that becomes a man, not to speak of a saint, in being a sloven. The point of faith, whatever we may have to do, is this, — that, be it a little thing or the greatest, it is all done for Him.

Thus we testify, even in daily conversation, too, that we are not living to self or the world, but to

Him who died and rose; and we shall surely have the power of the Spirit with us in all. Sweet testimony, though in the otherwise perishable things which pertain to this world; but it is a testimony which shall not pass away. We are but passing through a strange land: our home is with Christ; but we are where the Lord has called and put us for the present. Here we stay as long as He bids us work for Him; we journey at the commandment of the Lord; at the commandment of the Lord we abide. And so it is we are for Him to dispose of. We are in the wilderness; but meanwhile, instead of only drinking of a rock outside, we have a well within, yea, rivers of water flow out of us. It is the joy of Jesus reproducing itself here below — the power of the Spirit of God giving the heart now its present delight in Him above. There is the abounding sense that we belong to Him who is there now. All the glory of this world is judged as the meanest trash — as only the delusive tinsel of the devil to amuse a judged and perishing world.

Beloved, I would ask how far your souls are seeking this, and this only. I would ask myself the same thing. I desire grace from God that none of the truth which He is pleased to bring before us may degenerate into words of barren knowledge. Pardon me if I feel that none have to watch against this danger so much as ourselves. The mercy of God has been awakening His children, has called, or rather recalled, them to this truth, and much more — to the faith that was once delivered to the saints. It is an immense blessing, but along with it is just the responsibility and the danger. Who are most exposed to losing it and of becoming its bitter foes? Those who having known truth like this cease to live in it and to love it. How can it be lived in, unless Christ and not self be the object of our souls? Substitute for Him any thought of our ease or reputation, and all is defiled, all becomes polluted in its very spring. The Lord only knows what might be the end of such folly, save only for the grace of God which, as it took us up when there was not one right affection towards Him, and maintained us despite all our wretchedness, so can intercept the full results of our unfaithfulness and ingratitude. That blessed God who has Christ before Him, and has now the glorifying of Him by us in hand, does at the same time allow a sufficient play of moral responsibility in proof of what unbelief does even with a saint. But He can and does restore. May we count on His grace to keep as well as restore, while discerning His judgment of things and persons, and treating unsparingly all that which slights His word, and takes advantage of grace to deny the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Lord make and keep us lowly! May He so give us to see Himself in glory that all which is of this world may be ever judged in our eyes as awaiting only the hour of the harvest and of the vintage which is not yet come. Our joy is come in His glorification meanwhile, and in the Holy Ghost given to us before that hour. Jesus we know in heavenly glory, and that He has already sent down the Holy Ghost to bring us into the present power of glory. May we be vessels of His testimony; it may be, needing to be broken that the rivers may flow out the more freely, but nevertheless channels through which the rivers of living water flow, to the praise of His own grace and glory!