

## **A Sunday Morning Exhortation John Chapter 19**

The chapter we have just read from the gospel record by John brings before our minds the object for which we have met together around this table this morning. It is impossible for us to read the 19th chapter of John without being profoundly moved by that record and without having our hearts very deeply stirred within us by the record of those terrible events which happened on that day. There are few words in the whole of the Bible which are more calculated to deeply stir our emotions than that chapter. It is all very briefly summarized, again in the same record by John, in those words so well known by us in the 3rd chapter, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life". "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

That is the meaning of the tragic events narrated in the 19th chapter which we have just read.

Now if it were not for this fact of the love of God in giving Jesus to die as a sacrifice for our sins, we should none of us be here this morning. We should in all probability be just mingling with the world around us, aimlessly drifting through the world, drifting along without hope, fretting away a few years of toil and suffering, and then oblivion. That is where we should be apart from these facts which we have just read together this morning. That is the position of the world around us. The world may appear to be very happy, very gay, spending its time in a ceaseless round of gaiety, but in everything let us consider the end—the end is death, oblivion. It is a sort of butterfly existence, flitting about the world in more or less sunshine of life, but only for a few hours, and then the end—death, oblivion, extinction.

But how different, brethren and sisters, is our position around these emblems this morning. We want to carefully recognize the difference which is ours in the truth as compared with the world. We are a company of the sons and daughters of the great and eternal God, God's family, the brethren and sisters of the Lord Jesus Christ, this noble character who laid down his life for the sins of the world. We are here as the heirs of life eternal, not the possessors of life eternal at the moment, but having the sure and certain hope of attaining unto life eternal. We are the called of God. Those are truths concerning ourselves and by means of which we are enabled to make that contrast between our own position as we have been called in the truth, and the position of the world which exists around us. We can call to mind the words of the Apostle Paul in writing to the Ephesians, chapter 1, where he directs our thoughts into the same channel. Verse 3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved".

Yes, that is our position. The Apostle here just briefly defines it, and we have to remind



each other of these facts as we meet around these emblems week by week. We are here to speak of God's love and to stir up our own appreciation of it. God has given His beloved Son the Lord Jesus Christ to die as a sacrifice for sin, by which a new and a living way has been opened and by means of which we, the sinful sons of men, who by nature are related to death, have become related to eternal life and to the attaining of God's own unending divine nature.

Now the point is, do we realize how great, how immeasurably great, has been the love of God toward each one of us? We want to realize it; to endeavor to stir up our realization of these things around these emblems. Do we individually realize this fact of the love of God, that it has been extended to each one of us—do we realize how great it is? We are a company of men and women very little thought of by the world; by the world ignored, we might say despised and; forgotten; but the great God, the great Creator, the High and Holy One that inhabiteth eternity, the Creator of the heaven and the earth, has looked down upon us, and not only so, He has chosen us, He has called us, He has separated us from this world of the ungodly, and moreover He has given His only beloved Son the Lord Jesus Christ, to die for us in order that we, if we are faithful, may attain even-ally unto eternal life.

Those are the simple facts concerning ourselves—not varnished—they are just simple sober facts concerning God's love towards us. It is all of God's love; God is love; and we have the evidence of that in that wonderful and beautiful chapter which we have read together this morning. That is the first fact, the fact of God's boundless love towards His children. Then the second fact which also comes out in the chapter we have read is that in addition to God's love there is not only the love of Christ but also his loving submission to his Father's will for our sakes. As we have sung: "With gentle resignation still, He yielded to his Father's will, in sad Gethsemane". That was the keynote of the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, was it not? In all these terrible experiences which he endured on our account this fact of his resignation, his complete submission to his Father's will is to be seen in every point. We go back for instance to the chapter read yesterday, the 18th chapter and the 11th verse. You will remember how Peter sought to protect Christ from these terrible experiences, and you remember what Christ said to Peter: "Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" There was his resignation to his Father's will. That was on our account—let us open our hearts and minds to these facts. Christ endured this terrible death upon the cross for us; in the infinite love of Christ we have become related to this hope of eternal life.

We go back to the 26th chapter of the Gospel record by Matthew, and in verse 36 we have this simple and touching account of the work of Christ. "Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done."



Very touching, is it not? We cannot help being profoundly moved by the record of these events, but the point is we are here to remember them, that is the object of our meeting around these emblems this morning, not only to remember the facts, but to endeavor to let the facts themselves have their proper weight and influence upon us.

Well now what should that influence be? Here we are not left to ourselves; we have the Apostle Paul again coming to our assistance in regard to this matter in writing to the Corinthians, the 2nd epistle, chapter v. and the 14th and following verses: Paul tells us just what should be the effect of our realization and remembrance of these great facts. "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore"—because of these facts—"Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." Verse 21: "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Think of those words. As we assemble around these emblems in this appointed way, those words ring in our ears Sunday morning by Sunday morning—new creatures, old things passed away, all things new. We are made the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. Are those the thoughts which pervade our minds as we assemble together around these emblems? Yes, we think they are: we think those are the emotions which are stirred in the minds of each one as we partake of these emblems. Why these facts, that we are called to be new creatures? Why old things passed away? Simply because a new and a living way has been opened for us through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, because Christ died for us. That is why we have nothing to do with present things; that is why we are new creatures; that is why we endeavor day by day to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts; that is why we have this great and wonderful hope of eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Here is our high calling in Christ Jesus; and is it not a high calling? Who can realize the height of it; who can realize that great calling which has come to us in the truth—called to be sons and daughters of God, called to be members of His divine family in that day when Christ will see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, when everything finally that hath breath will praise the Lord. We are called to show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into the marvelous light of His truth. How can we do it? Paul tells us—by letting these things have their due weight and effect upon us, and by making ourselves, by the aid of God and His Word, new men and women, new creatures in Christ Jesus, by putting on the new man.

Again the Apostle helps us in the attaining of that idea. In the 3rd chapter of his epistle to the Colossians and the 10th and following verses. Reading at the 1st verse we find the Apostle says: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify—destroy—therefore your members which are upon the earth," and in verse 10 he goes on to say: "Put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."

There is our work in the Truth. Here, we may say, is our life's work in the Truth, the



creation of a new man. It matters not whether we have been in the Truth just a year or two or a week or two or whether it be half a century or even more—the work is the same and it is never completed. We can never turn round and say—we have done that, we have completed the creation of this new man in Christ Jesus. It is a work which will last so long as our probation endures, and it is the one great work which we are called upon to do, the creation of a new man in Christ Jesus, moulded after the image and in the pattern of Jesus Christ our elder brother who lay down his life for us, who was obedient in all things even unto death, and who has left us an example that we should follow his steps. That is the work which lies before us, it is our life's work and mission. Our earnest desire, I am sure, the one toward the other is that we may one and all have a full measure of realization of our duties and our responsibilities in this direction. That is the reason why we speak to one another, why we exhort one another, why we endeavor to encourage one another in the things of the Truth, that at the last we may be found to be conquerors, successful in the race for life eternal, having attained in a measure the development of that character moulded on the lines and after the pattern of Jesus Christ who is brought before us in these emblems upon the table.

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