

J. C. RYLE'S NOTES ON THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
14:27-31

27. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. 28. Ye have heard how I said to you, I go away and come *again* to you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice because I said, I go to the Father, for my Father is greater than I. 29. And now I have told you before it comes to pass, that when it does come to pass, ye might believe. 30. Hereafter I will not talk much with you, for the prince of this world comes and has nothing in me. 31. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

27.--[*Peace I leave with you.*] In this verse our Lord gives His disciples one more consolation. He bequeaths them as a legacy "peace;" not riches or worldly honor, but peace--peace of heart, conscience, and inward man, peace from a sense of pardoned sin, a living Savior, and a home in heaven.

Matthew Henry remarks here: "When Christ left the world, He made His will. His soul He bequeathed to His Father, and His body to Joseph. His clothes fell to the soldiers. His mother He left to the care of John. But what should He leave to His poor disciples who had left all for Him? Silver and gold He had none; but He left them what was far better--His peace."

[*My peace I give to you.*] The expression "my peace" seems to indicate something peculiar in the gift here promised. Does it not mean "a sense of that peace with God which I am purchasing with my blood, that inward calm and rest of soul which faith in Me procures for believers, that peace which it is my special prerogative to give to my people"?

[*Not as the world gives, etc.*] The first and fullest meaning of this sentence seems to lie in the kind of things which Christ gives: "I give you possessions which the world cannot give, because it has not got them to give." The world can give temporary carnal satisfaction and excitement, and can gratify the passions and affections and pride of the natural man. But the world cannot give inward peace and rest of conscience.

Some, however, think that the point of the sentence lies in the manner of the world's giving--temporarily, defectively, imperfectly, grudgingly, and the like. But, however true this may be, I prefer the view that the chief point is in the nature of the world's gifts compared to Christ's.

[*Let not your heart be troubled.*] This is a repetition of the words which began the long list of consolations in this chapter. "Once more I say to you, in view of the many grounds of comfort which I have just named, do not give way to trouble of heart."

[*Neither let it be afraid.*] These words are added to the opening charge, not to be "troubled." They point to a frame of mind which our Lord saw creeping over the disciples: "Let not your heart give way to cowardice."

Let it not be fearful." It is the only place in the New Testament where this word is used.

We need not doubt that the whole of this consoling verse is meant to be the property of all believers in every age.

28.--[*Ye have heard...I go away.*] This sentence must refer to 13:33-36 and 14:2,3,12. The disciples seem to have understood clearly that our Lord was leaving them, and that seems to have been one chief reason of their trouble and distress.

[*And come again to you.*] I must retain the opinion that this coming refers to the second advent and not to the resurrection of Christ. "My leaving the world until my second advent, you have heard me plainly teach and declare."

[*If ye loved...rejoice...go to the Father.*] These words mean: "If you really loved Me with an intelligent love, and thoroughly understood my person, nature, and work, you would rejoice to hear of my leaving the world and going to the Father, because you would see in it the finishing and completion of the work which the Father sent Me to do." Our Lord cannot, of course, mean that the disciples did not "love" Him at all, but that they did not rightly and intelligently love Him; otherwise they would have rejoiced at His completion of His work.

[*For my Father is greater than I.*] This famous sentence has always been an occasion of controversy and dispute. It presents two difficulties.

(a) What did our Lord mean by saying, "My Father is greater than I"? I answer that the words of the Athanasian Creed contain the best reply. Christ is no doubt "equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood." This we may freely and fully admit and yet not give up a hair's breadth to Arians and Socinians, who always throw this text in our teeth. The enemies of the doctrine of Christ's divinity forget that Trinitarians maintain the humanity of Christ as strongly as His divinity, and never shrink from admitting that while Christ as God is equal to the Father, as man He is inferior to the Father. And it is in this sense that He here says truly, "My Father is greater than I." It was especially spoken of the time of His incarnation and humiliation. When the Word was "made flesh," He took on Him "the form of a servant." This was temporary inferiority. (Phil. 2:7.)

(b) But what did our Lord mean by saying that the disciples ought to rejoice at His going to the Father BECAUSE "the Father is greater than I"? This is a hard knot to untie and has received different solutions. My own impression is that the meaning must be something of this kind: "Ye ought to rejoice at my going to the Father because in so going, I shall resume that glory which I had with Him before the world was and which I laid aside on becoming incarnate. Here on earth, during the thirty-three years of my incarnation, I have been in the form of a servant, and dwelling in a body as one inferior to my Father. In leaving this world I go to take up again the equal glory and honor which I had with the Father before my incarnation, and to lay aside the position of inferiority in which I have

tabernacled here below. I go to be once more Almighty with the Almighty, and to share once more my Father's throne, as a Person in that Trinity in which 'none is afore or after other, none is greater or less than another.' I go to receive the kingdom and honor which in eternal counsels the Father has prepared for the Son. And on this account, if you really knew and understood all, you would rejoice at my going. If I had not voluntarily placed myself in a position of inferiority to the Father by becoming man for man's sake, you would have no hope for your souls. But now the work is finished. I return to the Father and leave my position of inferiority and humiliation; and you ought to rejoice and be glad."

29.--[*And now I have told you, etc.*] This seems to refer to our Lord's going away. "I have told you plainly that I am leaving you and about to die on the cross, in order that when I do die and go, you may continue believing and not have your faith shaken."

30.--[*Hereafter...not talk...you.*] This must mean that our Lord would not talk much more before His crucifixion. The time was short and the betrayal and suffering drew nigh. It does not refer to the time after our Lord's resurrection and the forty days before His ascension.

[*For the prince of this world, etc.*] This means that Satan was drawing nigh for his last final assault on our Lord, and that he would find nothing to lay hold on and no weak point.

It is very striking to observe that our Lord does not say "Judas, the Romans, the Pharisees are coming." It is only the devil. He, as at the fall, is at the bottom of all. Others are only his tools.

We should note how the devil is called "the prince of this world." He rules and reigns in the hearts of the vast majority of mankind. The whole world "lies in the wicked one." Of the extent and intensity of Satan's influence on earth, even now we have probably very little idea.

When it says that he "comes," we must not suppose that it means "comes for the first time." All through our Lord's earthly ministry He was tempted and assailed and opposed by Satan. It must mean, "He is coming with special violence and bitter wrath to make his last attack on Me both in Gethsemane and on Calvary." There are evidently degrees at different seasons in the intensity and virulence of Satan's attacks.

When it says "has nothing in Me," it must mean that our Lord's heart and life were equally without spot of sin. He knew and felt that He the second Adam had nothing about Him that Satan could lay hold on. No one but Christ our Head could say that. The holiest saint could never say it!

Sanderson observes: "A cunning searcher had pried narrowly into every corner of His life; and if there had been anything amiss, would have been sure to have spied it and proclaimed it. But he could find nothing."

31.--[*But that the world...so I do.*] This is a somewhat dark and obscure passage. The meaning is probably something of this kind: "I do all I am doing now, and go to the cross voluntarily, though innocent, that the world

may have full proof that I love the Father who sent Me to die, and am willing to go through everything which He has commanded Me to go through. Innocent as I am, and without one spot of sin that Satan can lay to my charge, I willingly go forward to the cross to show how I love the Father's will and am determined to do it by dying for sinners."

[*Arise, let us go hence.*] These words seem to indicate a change of position, and probably mean that our Lord at this point rose from the table where He had been speaking and walked out toward the garden of Gethsemane. The rest of His discourse He seems to have delivered in the act of walking, without a single interruption from any of the disciples, until the end of the 16th chapter. Then, at some point unknown to us, He probably paused and offered up the prayer of the 17th chapter.

This is the view of Cyril, Augustine, and most commentators. Yet Jansenius, Maldonatus, Alford, and some others, think that our Lord never left the house and only rose from table at this point and went on with His discourse standing!

Lightfoot, almost alone, maintains the strange and improbable notion that the place where this discourse was delivered was Bethany, that the interval of a week comes into the narrative here, that at the end of this week the paschal supper and the institution of the Lord's Supper took place, and then came the discourse of the 15th chapter.

No commentator, perhaps, can leave this chapter without deeply feeling how little he knows and understands of the full meaning of much of its contents. May we not, however, fairly reflect that one great cause of the chapter's difficulty is man's entire inability to grasp the great mystery of the union of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in the Trinity? We are continually handling matters which we cannot fully comprehend, and cannot therefore fully explain, and must be content humbly to believe.