

Sermon Outlines

The Possibility of Failure

“They all drank of it.”
“Likewise also said they all.”
“They all forsook Him and fled.”
Mark 14:23, 31, 50

It is possible to stand on the bank of a stream which is so quiet that for a moment one hardly can tell in which direction the current is moving, or whether, indeed, there is a current at all. But as the eye sweeps the expanse of water it catches sight of a stake or a small tree which is strong enough to resist, and one soon sees the direction in which the stream is flowing.

Life is often like that placid stream: weeks and months and even years may flow by with not a ripple of sorrow or trouble or anxiety - nothing to show the direction of the life. But, sooner or later, some difficulty or bereavement or trial comes to test reality and power, and the true character of the life is revealed.

The disciples of Christ had spent three years with Jesus which were fairly quiet even though full of interest, enjoyment and inspiration. In His presence all was well, the flow of life steady even though the stream was not entirely clear. But then came a testing time and it revealed the trend of the disciple's lives by their weakness and their fall. This whole narrative is valuable because we are only what we are in an emergency. A crisis tests and special events show what use we have made of opportunities to store strength and build character. Above all, they reveal the genuineness of our Christian profession and whether we are truly born again.

I. Fellowship Enjoyed - “They all drank of it” (v. 23).”

1. Sacred Privilege of True Friendship

- a. In Orient, eating together had special significance - beggar, acquaintance, friend.
- b. Disciples had had three years of journeying and eating with Jesus-knowledge, love, friendship.
- c. This particular Passover meal had been according to the “desire” of Jesus (Lk. 22:15).

2. Solemn Occasion of Loving Farewell

- a. “Before I suffer” (Lk. 22:15) - Jesus gradually leading up to revelation of death which had not hitherto been clear.
- b. Now come His words about “remembrance” of Him - a keepsake - a last word or look.

3. Significant Symbol of Great Salvation

- a. During past years, words recorded in John 6 had foreshadowed Christ's death; now there is symbol, the “New Covenant”.
- b. Atonement - sacrifice for sin of whole world.

II. Faithfulness Assured - “Likewise so said they all” (v. 31)

1. Sincere Expression of Loyal Gratitude.

- a. Disciples' spirits uplifted - new privileges in sacrament - heard wondrous words recorded in John 14 - hearts glowed.
- b. Thrilled by loyalty and gratitude to Master - cheered by words recorded in John 15.

2. Strong Assertion of Real Constancy.

- a. Not aloud self-assertion but solemn vow and genuine love.
- b. Felt it incredible to fail such a Master.

Sermon Outlines

The Possibility of Failure

3. *Serious Ignorance of Personal Weakness.*
 - a. Surprising self-confidence - almost boastful.
 - b. Already forgot scattered sheep at smiting of shepherd, just quoted by Christ (v. 27) from Zechariah 13:78.

III. *Failure Manifested* - "They all forsook Him and fled" (v. 50).

1. *Selfish Ingratitude after Continual Blessing*
 - a. Cf. Christ's thoughts for them - "Come apart" (Mk. 6:31) - "I have prayed" (Lk. 22:32).
 - b. Now He needed sympathy, but they fled, leaving Him alone and forgotten.
2. *Sad Cowardice after Careful Training*
 - a. Ct. teaching in John 16:33 - "I have overcome" - and in Luke 10:19 - "I give unto you power."
 - b. Even assurance about twelve legions of angels did not inspire their confidence. They thought all was lost.
3. *Surprising Unbelief after Close Relationship.*
 - a. Secret, temporary loss of faith in Christ as Messiah.
 - b. Faith not completely eclipsed, after miracles; but sufficiently so to leave Christ solitary in His hour of suffering.

Conclusion

1. *A Great Privilege - Fellowship (v. 23)*
 - a. Fellowship means friends with nothing between (1 Jn. 1:7).
 - b. Christ our Peace has abolished enmity (Eph. 2:15).
 - c. The Lord's Supper beautiful expression of fellowship.
 - d. Christ *for* - atonement.
Christ *in* - life.
Christ *among* - fellowship.
2. *A Great Responsibility - Faithfulness (v. 31).*
 - a. Privilege implies responsibility.
 - b. Responsibility - our response to God's ability.
 - c. Danger in religious experience - dependence on emotion. Mr. Fact must lead Mr. Faith and only then comes Mr. Feeling (C. G. Trumbull).
 - d. Watchful - prayerful - trustful.
3. *A Great Disaster - Failure (v. 50).*
 - a. Needless, unwarranted, unjustifiable.
 - b. All that was needed was response.
 - c. Yielding to Christ: submit, admit, commit, permit, transmit.
 - d. Even after failure, we are to come back and make complete surrender, develop constant dependence, yield careful obedience.

So Christ will be all in all.

. . . . W.H. Griffith Thomas, D.D.