

## John 17:26 (James Butler Stoney) 171285

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Lecture on John 17:26, by Mr. J. B. Stoney.

In John's Epistle we read that the youngest class of believers know the Father. Scripture does not recognize—the believers in a lower place than knowing the Father; it does not say loving the Father. You know before you love. In the parable of the Prodigal Son the father first kissed, then clothed, and then feasted him. What you get the Lord setting forth is, I have declared Thy name unto them, and will declare it, that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me, may be in them and I in them. The first thing you find practically for the soul is that Christ has cleared away everything. Three actions, true of every soul, are set forth in Luke 15:1st. The shepherd goes after the lost sheep (the thief on the cross.) If the shepherd had not gone after the lost sheep the father could never have embraced the prodigal son. 2nd. The woman lights a candle, and seeks diligently for the lost piece of silver. 3rd. The Father meets the prodigal. If the light had not shone in the soul of the thief on the cross, he never would have come to God. Not only is Jesus there the shepherd going after the lost sheep, but the light shines in, and the Father has met him when so far away. There is the thief in the very grip of the law, about to be plunged in everlasting judgment, as one who has offended the law, no mercy for him, when in steps the Son of God. I bear the judgment. "The just for the unjust, to bring us to God." We have then that wonderful historical fact, that wonderful material fact, a fact that stood there open to the eye of every man, that the veil was rent from the top to the bottom. It was not the sinner's praying, but it was God saying, I can come out and take the greatest sinner to my arms.

The one thief did not see the Lord, the other not only saw Him, but had that wonderful disclosure made to his heart. "This man hath done nothing amiss." Could he do anything? It would not have been grace if he could. All grace could do was completely done. He died the just for the unjust to bring us to God. And the action following on conversion is, he prays. Confidence in God is established, he prays. The proof that Saul of Tarsus is converted is, Behold he prayeth. Very seldom souls look at that side of truth. There is the heavenly side. As a general rule the soul is more taken up with the effects of the grace.

He said to Mary Magdalene "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, my God and your God." She is a pattern of a heart true to Christ to the end. Christ will keep hearts true to Himself to the end, though the phase of the Church known as Philadelphian is wanting. A Laodicean is one who has Philadelphian truth without Philadelphian power. It is not that Philadelphia does not continue, but Laodicea sets in. The thing that makes Laodicea so mischievous is that with Philadelphian truth and Philadelphian standing there is not Philadelphian power. It is not, there will not be true Philadelphians among them, but Philadelphia will not be characteristic. Another point now as to knowing the Father. I turn you to 1 John 2:15. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The first thing is, that I know the Father. I can say I have a Father in heaven. "Take no thought for your life what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body what ye shall put on.... For after all these things do the Gentiles seek, for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Look at the Lord Jesus Christ in His wonderful solitary path here on earth. If deserted and left alone, His heart went on in that unswerving confidence, that dignity of knowledge of His Father's love. I know nothing so wonderful to think of as the Father's love. Do you never meet with a vexation? Hardly a day passes without them. What is the resource? The Father. Ye have lost the world, what will you do? I have the Father. Are you satisfied with the exchange, beloved friend? "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." It was long before I could believe that this is addressed to the young men. It does not mean the bad world merely, but it includes custom, the organizations men have instituted. What is to keep you from the world? It is a most interesting point, because it is the world with all the things that invite you that you are called here not to love. Am I callous to a beautiful view? It has not love for me. It is the love of the Father that really makes me superior to all things that are in the world. It is not that I cannot look at them or enjoy them in a way, "but my heart is not going after them, it is going after another thing. I have the Father's love." If a man is looking to get comfort or support or position from the world, he does not rise to the love of the Father. If the love of the Father were in him he would rise from the things to the source. "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." It is the thing that comes in to correct. There is no one here who has gone through the exercise that has not found when he left to, His Father the thing he was anxious about, it was perfectly seen to. Not a single thing ever happens as you forecast it, so you are wasting your time forecasting. I never met a man, however spiritual, that care about temporal matters would not damage him. Reverse it if you will, you work after the spiritual, leave it to God to look after the temporal. I believe it is a wonderful thing, I am only learning it myself. I am not entitled to anything, I leave it all to him, and I get the most extraordinary manifestations of His care in every way. The deepest and fullest love is not the love that can be demonstrated. I do not want to be signalized, but I want my friend to have a cipher between him and me. I don't want others to read it. God has a different cipher for each of us. I do not want Him to tell another what He said to me.

"I will declare Thy name." If I am near to Him He will declare it. I used to think if I could say, "My heart is fixed, I will fear no evil," I should be the happiest man alive. I did not know the Father's love. The love of the Father was not in me, so I was looking for the work of God's hand to be a secondary cause, to produce an effect. You must go higher than that.

I should like to turn to another subject, that is, the love of Christ. Though the babes know the Father, it is the fathers know Christ. I give you examples of what the love of Christ is. First, Gen. 1. I am quite aware this passage refers to the restoration of Israel to Christ, but in it I find a great practical application for the present time. I believe there are a great many acquainted with the service of Christ, who have not yet learned His heart. Have you ever come close enough to Him to learn His heart? When death has removed the screen, have you found out what your nature is in the sight of God? Here is a remarkable fact, that for 17 years these brothers had been living on the bounty of Joseph, and they had not known the heart of Joseph. Are not the most of Christians like that? We all have failed and come short of the glory of God. We never met the claims of God, like tenants that never paid, and the whole amount of the debt has accumulated. And God has sent His Son.

“He that believeth on the Son hath life.” You are not tenants now, you are children. It is an immense thing to get practically the fact that you are children. Suppose the debts are cleared away, that does not constitute you a child. Many a person is only trying to pay the rent. It is a wonderful thing to get hold of, simply that you are a child. You are transferred to a model farm; do you know what that is? It is worked at the landlord’s expense. The body is now to come out in Christ’s power, and according as it is seen here, so will it determine your relation to Christ in the kingdom. You were a bad tenant and could not pay the rent, He has forgiven all the arrears. You are clear now. Now you are my child, am I to continue here with this framework? With the very same body, the very same mind. If you walk in the Spirit you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. This is the wonderful problem of grace, the child is to be here in the very same body in which he was a very bad tenant; he is to be the manifestation of the beauty of Christ on this earth; and according to the manifestation here will be his relation to Christ in the kingdom hereafter. Souls ought to arrive at it by the very preaching of the gospel. They are simply kept to the fact that the debts are paid. What is the effect? The man who knows his debts are paid is roaming up and down the world for something to comfort him. People say we shall be children by and by. You are children now. Grace first meets us and pays the debt, and besides this a fortune is given us, for the use of which we are responsible. The responsibility is that we might be the expression of Christ in the body here on earth. It was a wonderful manifestation of the secret purpose of God that, when Satan used man to drive His Son from this earth, Christ would be manifested in thousands of bodies in this earth. Never was there so signal a defeat of Satan, and so complete a triumph of grace. There was one man the full, bright unflinching exhibition of God. Satan used man to drive Him from the earth. Now His body is formed on earth, its component parts each to exhibit the beauty and the grace of Christ. There is a simple flower called the hen and chickens daisy, all the small daisies grow out of the large central daisy, the one parent, and all of the one pattern. To be Christ-like is consecration. Consecration is not what I give to Christ, but what I get from Christ.

True, the debts are cleared away, but the other part of the Gospel is not sufficiently insisted on. The Lord does not speak first to the woman of Samaria about payment of the debts, but He tells her “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst.” I say that therefore, not only would she find she was in a condition full of recourses, but the very contrast to (chap. 2) the man that in his brightest day—his wedding cannot carry it on without wine. I only adduce that in order to show how the Lord Jesus was thinking, how He would make a poor heart abundantly happy. The Lord delights in my perfect happiness. “I will praise the name of God with a song, and magnify Him with thanksgiving, this also shall please the Lord better than an ox, or bullock, that hath horns and hoofs.” No devotedness in sacrifice can please Him as when the soul can say, I am perfectly happy in the knowledge of your love. That necessarily produces worship. Having said so much, I turn to the chapter brought forward in the first morning meeting, (Num. 21) After 39 years, of the most unexampled unparalleled goodness of God, it comes out man is ruined. They murmur against God—you must go back to your old state, He tells them—and the Lord sent fiery serpents among them, they bit the people, and much people of Israel died. Not only was the Brazen Serpent the cure, but we find it written, “Gather the people together, and I will give them water.” I not only relieve them of all their ruin, but I give them a fortune.

Suppose a relative of yours is in the debtors’ prison. You say, I will release him. Did you do nothing for him? You have left that poor fellow in need and distress. But suppose you put him in a position, where he never can exhaust what you gave him, and the more he uses it the more he discovers the fortune he possesses. God has given me that very spirit, whereby I call Him Father. That is what is left out. Those who preach are clear enough about paying the debts—I thank God it is so clear—but why should I lose the best of it? God delights in my happiness. He has given the living water—the Holy Ghost—“They began to be merry.” As someone said, “they have not done yet.”

How does it come. This living water? I turn to Psa. 22. It will show you where the great defect is, and where there is a defect in the preaching. I want to set forth to you why it is so little known to the soul. In Ps. 22nd are two grave subjects. Only one man ever could reach these two subjects. One is He knew the measure of the sin we had done against God. I must be equal to a person to know how he feels an offense. That stamps Him as the Son of God. No one knew that love but Himself; only one man ever knew the measure of the sin; He removed it. The other thing is the love: He declared it. Why a soul is not able to listen happily to the declaring of the love is because he is not clear of the sins. All that is against me the Lord Jesus Christ has encountered and removed. There are several giants that He overcame, bodily weakness: sin: bulls of Bashan: dogs: Satan himself He encounters.

But as David over Goliath He is victorious over them all. Another word—the Lord grant it may be fastened on your soul—whatever you see of Christ you possess. If you see Him victorious, you are in the victory, a man in bodily weakness is like a ship waterlogged; no time when a soul is more tested. You are looking at the giant, and what you ought to have looked at, is the One who was victorious over the giant. For whom did He get the victory? For Himself? Never! Thank God He got it for me, and as my eye is upon Him I am in His victory. What is the second thing? “I will declare thy name unto my brethren.” You are occupied with some of the giants, if you are not occupied with the victorious one. The bulls, religious pretension, the dogs, the earthly power.

What you have to learn practically is what Jonathan reasoned: not only do I see Goliath floored, and his head off, but I see the head of Goliath in David’s hand. You have not a good conscience until then. You do not see the enemy out of the way. How can you be occupied with David until that which is the terror of your heart is cleared away. Now you can listen to another thing — “I will declare Thy name.”

How many never have come to close quarters with Christ—never have known what they are in God’s sight. Hence, in some cases aberration of mind and despair. Not a doubt about Christ having taken their sins away, but they have not known His heart. If it has a dark side, it has the brightest side that ever was known to the soul. I never knew before the heart of Christ. “Joseph wept when his brethren spoke to him.” “Fear not,” he said to them. “I will nourish you and your little ones, and he comforted them and spoke to their heart.” There is a double action. I ask you to ponder it well. I believe that is only one phase of it. Though you have to learn what you are in yourself, it may not be true of many in this assembly, that though they have learned that Christ takes away their sins, they have never learned their defiled nature in the sight of God. There is another action: you make acquaintance with your Saviour. In the history of Joseph’s brethren, it is marked by the fact that they saw their father was dead. All that would intercept them from Joseph was gone. When the soul gets the knowledge of the Father’s love, the world loses its hold on the heart. I have the love of the Father; the world and the things therein go. In leaving the love of Christ to me, man goes, I have a love that does not let anything come between. “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.” In the 50th of Genesis we see Joseph’s brethren had never been exercised in love as to their true relation to him those 17 years; they had lived on the bounty of Joseph, and they had not made acquaintance with him. They had never come to acknowledge their ruin and guilt. “Mine iniquity have I not hid.” I tell the Lord not only what He has done for me in putting my sins away, but I have made a clean breast to Him of the defilement of my nature, my heart. Does He spurn me? No. I find He has a love that will take account of everything: every single thing that belongs to me. I believe, at

the bottom of a good deal that is called aberration of mind, there is some unjudged evil. There it is. You have not brought it to the Lord, where yourself is nothing, where you find how contemptible you are. Two characteristics of power I remark here. Helpless, I walk on the water; contemptible, I command the grace of Christ. I have reduced, myself to nothing, like the Syrophenician woman; then I succeed.

In Luke 5 it is a man doing everything right. He is giving his ship to the Lord, like a man, giving his time and money for the gospel. He is perfectly exemplary, and crowned with favor. A most wonderful miracle of fish he had had. He had the two things a Jew would delight in—conduct and favor. “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” It is not he is not devoted to Christ, but he has not reached the love. When he learns it, he forsakes all, and follows Christ. The very argument he might have used for retaining the ships, because of the wonderful divine miracle connected with them. Everything is left: he has now One that satisfies his heart.

I turn now to the 11th chapter of John’s Gospel. Here it is not a question of sin at all; it is bereavement. “He whom thou lovest is sick.” Lazarus died. My impression is, that Martha questioned the power of the Lord, but Mary may have had misgivings about His love. He comes in here. Death has removed all that would be the stay of the heart. Death has done its worst. Other things could be ameliorated. This cannot be. I come now to acquaint you with what My love is. Have you ever passed through bereavement? He does not talk of raising Lazarus. Do you look for His power, or do you yearn for His sympathy? Trial does not soften character; it is sympathy that softens. A man that passes through a deal of trial, and does not meet with sympathy, that man is as hard as a rock. The Lord says, I have a deeper sense than you have of the sorrow. My sorrow should be deep as the person’s that is suffering; I should have a heart, at leisure from itself, to sympathize with another. Death has left you stranded here; I can come to you in your solitude, and acquaint your heart with a deeper solitude. You get in the Gospels two alabaster boxes, very different in kind. The one is spent upon a living Christ, the other for His burial. Everything went into His grave.

One verse more before I close (Eph. 3:17), “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;” that He Himself may be in you. Now when was that said? After they were blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. They were to be occupied with the One that brought them to heaven, to that wondrous domain, to the plenitude of God Himself! There you are to learn the love of Christ outside of everything on earth. You are to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God. The Lord lead us, beloved friends, practically to understand this. It is not said of the Church only, but of the individual, “He loved me and gave Himself for me.” What I want to lay upon your heart is the wonderful effect of the love of the Father and of Christ. First, the nature of the love; then the effect of it. I know the love of that heart—I can turn to it. I mention things to him—I know the love is there. The books of faith do mischief to the soul. They lead you to form your idea of the love from the way it acts. I know the love, whatever its acts may be. People delight to read things to prove to them that God cares for them. What poor love it is that requires demonstration. The one that loves me best I would not ask for proof of it. It is a very rare person that I do not know how much he cares for me. It is not doing a thing that would prove it. Why the smallest thing done by a hand that cares for you carries with it a fragrance that the mightiest thing done by one who does not care for you never could have. What I want you to understand is, how the Lord has set Himself to make known His love to you, and to declare the Father’s name. The Lord grant we may each of us practically understand it. We shall have the very same future with Christ. Well each of us may bless the Lord for the very word of truth now brought before us through His grace, and may go on our journey here rejoicing, to the praise of His name. Amen,

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