

THE SUFFERING SAVIOUR

Meditations on the Last Days of Christ

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE TRAITOR'S KISS

WE DIRECT OUR EYES, once more, to the armed multitude who had reached the garden of Gethsemane in quest of Jesus. They have just risen up from the ground on which they had been thrown by the power of the Lord's word, "**I am He!**"

Among those who had been thus hurled to the dust was Judas. It might have been supposed that this renewed manifestation of the majesty of Jesus would have finally scared the son of perdition, like some fiery sign or signal of danger, from his traitorous path. But he had undertaken to act the part of a leader; and what a coward would he have appeared in the eyes of his patrons and superiors had he not resolutely performed his promise!

Suffice it to say, he again stands before us at the head of the murderous band. His bearing indicates a hypocritical resolution; but something very different is expressed in his averted looks and convulsively contracted lips, as well as in the restless working of the muscles of his pallid countenance. But he has pledged his word and concluded his contract with Satan. The traitorous signal must follow. Hell reckons on him, and would not for the world lose the triumph of seeing the Nazarene betrayed into its hands by one of His own disciples.

We may have read and heard a thousand times of this horrible fact, and yet as often as it is repeated, we are astonished afresh, as if we had never heard it before.

Can there be a more appalling or more deeply affecting scene than this treacherous betrayal of his Master? Where did ever personified goodness and consummate wickedness, heaven and hell, meet in more open and awful contrast? Scarcely can we support the overpowering impressions which we here receive of the superabundance of divine love and meekness on the one hand, and the fullness of Satanic wickedness on the other!

We are witnesses of a parting scene - one of the most melancholy and mysterious the world has ever beheld - Jesus and His disciple Judas, separated forever.

Before we view, in the traitor's kiss, the mature infernal fruit of his inward corruptions, let us cast a look at the prophecies respecting him and his course of life.

- In Psalm 41 we read, “**Mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.**”

- In Psalm 109, “**Let his days be few; and let another take his office . . . As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him; as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing like as with a garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones.**”

- In Psalm 69, “**Let his habitation be desolate, and let no one dwell in his tents.**”

That which led Judas into fellowship with Jesus was probably the hope of acting a prominent part in the kingdom of his wonder-working Master. Finding that he had formed an erroneous idea of that kingdom, which was the reverse of what he expected, he seizes, as we have already seen, the money with which he was entrusted, to compensate him in a small degree, for his disappointment. The scene at Bethany then occurred, which convinced him that his baseness was discovered; and he then gave way to those feelings of animosity and hatred which afterward prompted him to betray his Master for thirty pieces of silver. We have seen how, after receiving the sop from the latter, the devil entered into him, and from that moment he became the entire property of Satan.

Let us now return to the scene we were contemplating.

The sign of betrayal which had been agreed upon had been rendered superfluous by the voluntary approach of Jesus, and His majestic declaration concerning Himself. The armed band, however, were unwilling that Judas should forego it. Hence they hinted to him by their looks, to keep his word; and Judas, to conceal the discouraging impression which the overwhelming words of Jesus had produced upon him, as well as in the furtive hope of disarming the anger of the Holy One of Israel against him by the mark of affection which accompanied his flattering salutation, approaches the Lord under the mask of friendly intimacy, welcomes Him with the formula of hearty well-wishing, “**Hail, Master!**” and ventures, like a poisonous viper hissing forth from a rose-bush, to pollute the Son of man, amid the plaudits of hell, with his treacherous kiss!

This act is the most profligate and abominable that ever emanated from the dark region of human sinfulness and degeneracy. It grew on the soil, not of devilish, but of human nature, although not without infernal influence, and hence it may be attributed in all its infamy, to our own race.

It condemns our whole race, and at the same time places beyond question the entire necessity of an atonement, mediation, and satisfaction, in order that our souls may be saved. The kiss of Judas is the indelible brandmark on the forehead of mankind, through which their “virtuous pride” receives the stamp of lunacy and absurdity.

Would that the traitor’s kiss had remained the only act of its kind! But, in a spiritual sense, Jesus has still to endure it a thousandfold to this hour.

- For, hypocritically to confess Him with the mouth, while the conduct belies Him
- to exalt the virtues of His humanity to the skies, while divesting Him of His divine glory, and tearing the crown of universal majesty from His head

- to sing enthusiastic hymns and oratorios to Him, while trampling His Gospel by word and deed under foot

What is all this but a Judas-kiss with which men have the audacity to pollute His face?

“**Hail, Master!**” exclaims the traitor.

These words are like two poisonous daggers in the heart of the Holy One. He calmly accepts them, nor does He refuse even the infernal kiss itself. He knows that this grief of heart was also a drop of the cup which His Father had apportioned Him, and that at the bottom of this horrible act lay the determinate counsel of the Almighty.

It is a testimony to the divine endurance of the Lord Jesus; for the traitor would not have chosen this as the signal for betraying his Master had he not been aware of the latter’s boundless long-suffering. Thus, with the very kiss with which he delivered Him up to His captors, Judas was compelled to glorify Him, and enhance our ideas of the infinite condescension and love with which he had been favored by the Saviour.

“**Friend,**” says the Lord Jesus, with pathetic seriousness, “**wherefore art thou come?**”

Who would have expected such mildness on the present occasion? A “**Get thee behind me, Satan!**” would have been more appropriate in the eyes of many. Instead of which, we hear a sound like the voice of a parent tenderly concerned for the soul of his deeply seduced child.

Certainly, an outburst of flaming passion would not have been so annihilating to the traitor as was this exhalation of compassionate charity. The word “**friend,**” which in the language speaks of a “*companion,*” recalled to his mind the privileged position with which, as having been received into the circle of the Lord’s most intimate associates, he had been favored. This address reminded him also of the many manifestations of unspeakable kindness and grace with which he had been loaded for three whole years.

“**Friend,**” says the Lord, “**wherefore art thou come?**” or, “why standest thou here?”

The dreadful question rolls like terrific thunder through the traitor’s heart. His conscience awakes in a moment from its deadly sleep, and feels itself carried away, as by an Almighty hand, to the bar of divine judgment. But Judas forcibly resists his own conscience, stifles the confession on the lips of his inward monitor, and succeeds in again compelling it to silence and apathy. Hence the Lord has nothing left but to let the stroke fall upon the door of his heart, which, if it does not succeed in breaking it open, acts as the knell of eternal reprobation to the traitor.

The Lord now calls him by his name, as men hope to awake a lunatic sleep-walker, who is seen treading on the edge of a precipice, before casting himself down. “**Judas,**” says the Lord, with emphasis, as if He would leave nothing unattempted for his rescue, and as if He intended by it to say, “Does not the mention of thy name remind thee that thou art called after the noble and princely tribe of which thou art a scion, and yet dost thou come to Me in this manner?”

After thus mentioning his name, our Lord plainly characterizes his deed. Yet even then we hear Him giving a turn to His speech, as if He disbelieved the possibility of the traitor's purpose. As if still questioning it, He says, "**Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?**"

"Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"

This is, therefore, the eternal farewell to the miserable apostate from the lips of the Saviour of sinners. Woe to the unhappy man! Hell triumphs over him, heaven forsakes him, and the hollow thunder of that question still rolls over the head of Judas.

Deeply affected, we close our meditation.

Let what has been brought before us have its full effect upon us. Let no pharisaical thanking God that we are not like that man, weaken the impression. The germ of what he was, lies in each of us, and may develop itself before we are aware, unless we place ourselves betimes under the protection of divine grace. Satan has not yet ceased "**Going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.**"

Let us, therefore, hasten to save our souls and guard our hearts, like a city besieged by the enemy.

But our arms of defense must be sought where alone they can be found - beneath the wings of Christ. He is our rock and our fortress, our refuge and strength, and our very present help in every time of need.

~ end of chapter 15 ~

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