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## The Watchword of the Son of Man (1929)

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We are to consider briefly that solemn watchword of our Lord's life on earth by which the stages of His advance toward His ultimate purpose were governed and marked: for He went toward that ultimate purpose by stages governed by a consciousness which found its expression in a familiar phrase, "Mine hour." That was the solemn watchword of our Lord's life and progressive movement into and unto His ultimate purpose, and we shall look at some of those movements as defined by that expression.

### **1. The Sign of the Ultimate Purpose.**

In the first place let us turn to John 2. You know this is the account of the miracle of turning water into wine at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the thing upon which everything turned was this utterance, "Mine hour is not yet." Mary, His mother in the flesh, had come to Him saying, "They have no wine." Whether she was anticipating a miracle on His part or not, we need not stay to discuss. Probably not, for His answer is illuminating. It is very harsh in our English language, which does not convey a certain softness that really was in His own words. Our language simply bluntly puts it this way, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet." Literally He said this, "What is there in common between you and Me," which being expounded means this, you are thinking of one thing and I am thinking of another. Your mind is in one realm, My mind is working in another. You are wanting one thing, I am after another. What is there in common between thee and Me? We are

in two different realms of thought, of inclination, of intention, of desire. That, I say, is very significant and very suggestive, as the original language makes it perfectly clear that that is what He said, and therefore you come to this conclusion, that He had a mind, a very clear mind, a made-up mind, a settled mind as to what He would do.

What He was after and the thing that was going to happen had a significance in His mind which far transcended anything that was in the mind of anyone else: there was really no comparison or relationship between these other thoughts and His. He had something in mind which they did not discern or perceive. When you realise that this was the beginning of His ministry, and that this was the first manifestation of that Divine Sonship in its sovereignty, then you have a clue; you recognise that He is making this first thing a very, very significant thing indeed; that in His mind this is full of eternal significance, and no one else saw that, but He knew, and He was moving in a definite and deliberate act and stage toward that ultimate thing which He was now projecting in this positive and definite way. Now you break the thing up, and you find that the key-words are, "Mine hour," and the last word, "manifested His glory." Then the miracle, or the sign, as you notice, had wine as its occasion and basis. Wine is a symbol in the Word for blood and life, very often interchangeable words, and very often synonymous terms. As we gather around the Lord's Table we recognise that the wine is the symbol of the blood which contains the Life, and this symbol was the basis and the occasion of this sign, or act, which issued in His glory relative to His hour, and marked a definite stage toward an ultimate purpose.

Here He ceases to be a private person, and crosses the line into public life, and from this moment He was a marked man. On the one hand, sought after because of certain benefits which He was considered capable of bestowing; on the other hand, sought after for His destruction; but from this moment He was out in the open, and it was this deliberate stepping across the line with this thing which was in His mind relative to "the hour" that committed Him to the battle which had its consummation in the last declaration of this watchword: "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be delivered into the hands of wicked men and should be crucified." He crossed the line in Cana of Galilee and related this to the first expression "Mine hour," "the hour," and in between you mark the stages, the progress toward that.

Now what is the thing that is in His mind? Everything that the Master did was deliberate. There was nothing casual; there were no side-shows in the Master's life; there was nothing that was merely incidental. Everything was in the direct line of His ultimate purpose, and He would not accept an invitation to a marriage festivity just on sentimental grounds. This thing was not a social incident in His life, it was brought right into direct line with His ultimate purpose, and that is why the whole thing was made to centre in this "Mine hour." This beginning of signs related to His glory. Then if He takes hold of this thing and turns it thus to be a sign, the meaning of this is that He projects, as it were, upon the screen, all the purpose of His coming, a marriage relationship upon a basis of Life, and that Life as found in His blood, and the ultimate Purpose looms into view.

The hour in which He is glorified is that when He gets that which stands in relationship to Him as a bride, and it throws you right on into that unveiling through Paul, "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her." That is the end of this. His hour is related to that, and His glory is related to that. In simple words, it is this that the Son of Man requires for the manifestation of His glory, that church which stands in this relationship to Him upon a basis of One Life for which He gave Himself. He takes hold of this which otherwise would have been an ordinary occasion of social festivity, He turns it to account and makes of it the occasion of the sign of His

ultimate Purpose. "This beginning of signs" - that is what it signifies here, and the miracle of death and resurrection by which He gets His church, is foreshadowed, foreseen in this - the Life poured out, the basis of a union. "Mine hour." That is "the hour," and He has, as we have pointed out, deliberately stepped out to that.

As we pass on, let us take with us this central thought. It is a Life which is in question which is to be shared by a corporate company in a marital union with the Lord Jesus in His Resurrection; a Life, a triumphant Life, by which the church is secured triumphantly over death. Now we cannot stay for anything more about that, but we take up the clue and pass on with that in our hands.

## **2. The Security of the Ultimate Purpose.**

The next is in John 7:30: "They sought therefore to take Him: and no man laid his hand on Him because His hour was not yet come."

What was His own later comment upon that?

"I lay it down of Myself, no man taketh it from Me. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again. This commandment have I received from My Father." "No man laid his hand upon Him because *His Hour* was not yet come." *The Hour* of His authority for laying down that Life. The death of the Lord Jesus Christ was not just to be murder. The murderer was out, he of whom the Lord said, "he is a murderer" was out to murder the Son of God, and he is seeking all the way through to bring about His untimely death, His destruction, and you notice how varied are his methods. The first temptation - "Cast Thyself down for it is written He will give His angels charge concerning Thee. In their hands shall they bear Thee up lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone." You see he was trying to bring about His undoing and His death by not keeping in the way of God. If the Lord had acted upon the basis projected by the devil, the angels could not have upheld Him, He would have been dashed to pieces. That would have been the untimely end. The Master saw through it, and from that first time of temptation onward the devil is out to murder, but the death of Christ is not murder. His death, when it came about, was to be deliberate and in the will of God, and therefore victorious, not defeat.

Now, as you have the sign of the ultimate Purpose in the first occasion, here you have the security of the ultimate Purpose: that that Life cannot be touched by man; that Life is a thing which man cannot interfere with. The laying down of that Life is a deliberate act of authority, and in the same authority it will be taken up again, the triumph of that Life in Resurrection, because it is in the will and purpose of God, and neither devil nor man can touch that. It is a very blessed thing, beloved, to know this as a practical thing, that if we possess that Life and are keeping in the way of the Lord, there can be no untimely end. Everything will be deliberate, however it may appear. The murderer is defeated, the Purpose is secured in that Life, the triumph of that Life as it is kept sheerly in the way of the Divine will. Get out of that and deviate, and you have no guarantee of protection from the murderer. Keep in that, and "no man laid hand upon Him"; "His hour was not yet." The security of the ultimate Purpose is in that Life maintained in the will of God.

## **3. The Law of the Ultimate Purpose.**

Pass on hurriedly to the 12th chapter. The Greeks enquired for Him saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus." His response to the enquiry is, "*the Hour* is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die," etc. Perhaps [there is] no more familiar passage to us than that - a corn of wheat issuing in the Resurrection Body; the Son of Man thus glorified; the triumph of Christ over death in a bodily form. It is true that in an isolated capacity and apart altogether, He triumphed personally over death, but that is not the only method of God of demonstrating the fact. The fact of His triumph over death is also in a corporate Resurrection Body with all the members sharing that Resurrection Life. That is the testimony to the fact that He has risen; that is also an Instrument by which it is to be proved to the universe that He is alive from the dead.

*The law of that ultimate Purpose* is here seen - "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die."

The sign of the ultimate Purpose; the security of the ultimate Purpose; the law of the ultimate Purpose. What is that? *Life through Death.*

Now we are so familiar with this truth that it hardly needs further emphasis or words, but, beloved, let it be said as we pass on that everything to the most minute detail which relates to that ultimate Purpose of God has to be born in the power of His Resurrection. All relationships! Oh, how we are tested upon that! A relationship, and the Lord calls upon you to let that relationship go. The Cross and your position in relation to the Lord Jesus costs you that, and that is to go down into death. The relationships are all tested down there, and then, what is of God comes back, it must survive. What is not of God we become quite content to do without. We come up in the victory of His Life.

If a thing has been sown of God in the grave of the Lord Jesus, it is in the power of a Life that cannot see death, which cannot see corruption; it will come up, but this time on a higher level. That is the history of many a personal experience. That is the continual order, the cycle of the law of this progress of the ultimate Purpose, and I think the Church will be baptised into a deeper death just before the Lord comes than ever it has been before, and then it will go higher than ever; it will not be able to get any higher, it will bound to the utmost heights. This is the law of the ultimate Purpose which is wrought out in individual lives in every relationship, in every thing. It results in this, that you do not come back to the single plane, you come back to the multiple plane - increase - the one corn changed to the many, all sharing One Life.

#### **4. The Basis of the Ultimate Purpose.**

Let us now turn to Matthew 26:18. Here the Master is preparing for the Passover, sending a messenger to a certain man He evidently knows in secret, and He says to this man, "My time is at hand; prepare Me a place where I may keep the Passover." The Passover. Here the Blood is again in view, but what is the most conspicuous thing relative to this particular Passover Supper and the shed Blood? It is a covenant. Do we not read, "This is the new covenant in My Blood which is shed for the remission of sins." The blood of the Eternal Covenant. It is a covenant in view; now in the Passover. Tracing this thing through the Word, as in the case of Israel and the Passover, it was in that blood of the lamb, a covenant between the Lord of Life and His people as against the lord of death and his authority, and in that covenant with His people made in the blood of the Passover Lamb they were secured from the tyranny of "him that had the power of death, that is the devil," and were brought out from death into life, from darkness into light, from bondage into liberty, from shame into glory, from desolation into fruitfulness.

That covenant was the basis of their emancipation, and all that is bound up now with this - a new covenant in My Blood - is the covenant between Himself, the Lord of Life and His own elect ones by which they are going to be made victorious over death in their union with Him as members of His Body, as seen in the other side of the supper; the covenant with His Church by which death is robbed ultimately, finally of its power. Here you have the basis of His ultimate Purpose, and, beloved, it will be upon the basis of that covenant in His Life that we are maintained victorious. That is, here you have the thing made in the Blood and in the Life of the Eternal Son of God, Whom "God brought again from the dead by the blood of the Eternal Covenant," which is the absolute ground of your victory. "He is a God Who keepeth covenant." This covenant is an Everlasting Covenant, the Eternal Covenant of a Life which cannot see corruption, and upon that basis we are bound to go through triumphantly. He will not break this covenant with us. This covenant stands to bring us into that union with Himself which is going absolutely to triumph.

Now you see what He secures here in His covenant is a basis; that relationship in Life by which He is going to work out all that was wrought in the Cross, and in the Resurrection. We have anticipated this, but here the stronger emphasis comes. How is He going to demonstrate throughout the Kosmos that He has triumphed over death? In those who are in covenant relation with Him upon the basis of this One Life! So He sits down with His disciples, and in this testimony He declares that oneness in His death and in His burial and in His Resurrection - victory! "God says what is true of Me is going to be true in you, that is, victory over death and here I make the Covenant which cannot be broken that we together are going to display this victory of this Life throughout the universe." A Covenant in Life. That is *the Hour*. "*Mine Hour is at Hand*."

## **5. The Mind and the Method of the Ultimate Purpose.**

Now let us turn to John 13. Here you have the account of the feet-washing. "Jesus knew that His hour was come. And that the Father had delivered all things into His hands. He came forth from God and went to God." How rich that is! But that is the basis of what is going to take place now. All things delivered unto Him of the Father, knowing that He came forth from the Father and returned to the Father. Upon that basis He rose from the supper and took a towel, laid aside His garment, girded Himself and poured water into a basin and washed the feet of the disciples. Then cometh He to Simon - knowing that the Father had given all. And then this remarkable statement so full of significance, "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know afterwards." Then this must be a symbolic act, and mean a sign. It is a sign of Jesus. It ranges the ages, and it ranges the eternities, and could truly be paraphrased in this way:-

"He rose from His Throne; He laid aside the garments of Light; He took the poor towel of our humanity and wrapped it around His glorious Person, and poured His own Blood into the basin of the Cross, and set Himself to wipe from the universe the foul stains of sin." Or put round the other way, He is about to lay aside the garment of humiliation, enter into the presence of God, girded to make abiding intercession in virtue of His shed blood for the maintenance of a life, walk, work, and fellowship of holiness on the part of His servants.

That is what is signified in this. Oh, you say, that is imagination taking flight. Oh, no, come again to Philippians 2. There He is in the throne with God. "He thought it not something to be grasped at to be on equality with God; He emptied Himself; laid aside the garments of glory. He rose from His throne of equality with God and took upon Himself the form of a servant, being found in fashion as a man." There is the towel of our humanity (in essence He was always equal with the Father, but in

ministry He accepted our dependence). He came forth, poured His blood out to wipe the stains of sin from the universe; that is why there is this basis, "Knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and He came forth from the Father and returned to the Father." You see *that* is the background of this thing. "What I am doing thou knowest not now," but they did know afterward. All this said to them, this is the way of the highest service, not to be important, not to be high and lifted up above everyone else; for this was a blow at their attitude at this very time, when no one would take upon himself the form of a slave and wash the others' feet; but this is the way.

Now recognise this one central thing. Pride was the source of all human sin. Satan started this awful thing there. "Thou saidst in thine heart, I will be equal with the Most High," he who had no right to it, and sought to grasp at that. He who had the right to it did not think it a thing to be grasped at, and saw a need for laying it down, so He rebukes them thus. Pride was the source of all human sin, and the wreckage of the world; so Christ must needs provide an antidote for the source of sin. What is that? His own humiliation. He reverses the order, and ends all this work of the devil by and in His humiliation. Now He says in effect to them, and to us, Do you want to remove the ground from the devil, pride must be torn from your hearts, and you must pour yourself out unto death; pour yourself out for the sake of the Name, and for the sake of others. Position, prestige, reputation, these must be of no concern whatever. The spirit of victorious service is this. So here you have the mind, and the method of the ultimate Purpose. "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus, Who, being in the form of God, thought it not a thing to be grasped at to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, being made in the likeness of men; and as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the Cross. Wherefore (knowing that He returned unto the Father - this was the way up; this was the way back to the glory - He came forth from God and He was going unto God, and all things are His) God has highly exalted Him and given Him the name above every name."

## **6. The Instrument of the Ultimate Purpose.**

"Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son" (John 17:1).

John seventeen is a chapter of great range. Back to the past Eternity (5), on through all time (23), unto eternity to be (25). Heaven, earth, hell, believers, unbelievers, and the Evil One, are all touched.

With all these in full view the Great High Priest stands by the altar of the Cross and prays. He is praying a prayer of universal and timeless dimensions. And yet He focuses it all upon a point in time which He calls "The Hour." To what does that eternal hour relate? To the glorifying of the Son, Who is praying! What is one of the prominent factors in that glorifying? That the world might know that He had been sent by the Father, and that He should be believed on in the world!

By what means will that be brought about? What will be the ultimate proof that He came, and coming, accomplished His work successfully? By the triumphant manifestation of His own one Life by which the "Church - which is His Body" is constituted a living organism through that deathless and indestructible Life. The heart of this far-reaching and many-sided chapter would seem to be the constituting of an effectual testimony to the Lord Jesus to the nations in and through the Church in virtue of His Cross. This testimony is seen to have as a primary and basic truth, the organic oneness of all members of Christ. The nature and pattern of this oneness is revealed in verse 21. It is oneness in God and in Christ. It is not merely the presenting of a united front to the world, but the impact of a mighty Presence.

Christ dwelt in the Father; had His life in the Father in the days of His flesh. He said "I live by the Father." It was the effect of this that demonstrated the oneness. The oneness is a spiritual power not an organised force. A world governed by "The spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" will not bow to a common testimony to objective truths, however many may represent them. The conviction that Christ has come rests upon the abiding power of His imparted Life which is the common possession of all who are truly His by new birth. To know God and Jesus Christ Whom He did send is a matter of Life (3). It is not life resultant from knowledge, but knowledge resultant from Life. When the Lord Jesus prays that the world may know and believe, He makes that consequent upon the living manifestation of the believer's union with and abiding in the Father and Himself, which relationship would issue in a common witness to the living reality of Christ.

This then is a full consecration chapter, based upon His own model - "For their sakes I consecrate Myself" (19). There may be different aspects of the oneness in the chapter. Verse 21, in basic oneness in Christ. Verse 11 may be that manifest oneness as on the Day of Pentecost. Verse 23 is a process and a consummation, ultimate oneness. The glorifying also is threefold. There is the glorifying of the Father in the Son, verse 1. Then the glorifying of the Son in the church, verse 10. Finally the glorifying of the church in the Son, verse 24.

Now all this is gathered up into the "Hour" which is the hour of the Cross, and the Cross is necessary for it and basic to it. The common participation in the Life of the Lord demands the end of the self-life. It is the self-life that obscures the glory of Christ. The whole trend of the flesh is to take the glory from Christ. The "flesh" is the principle of the fallen humanity by which initially and continuously the Adversary robs God of His glory, and mars that which was made for His glory.

The background of this prayer is the "Evil One," working through fallen human nature, splitting it into unholy rivalries, schisms, factions, partisanships, jealousies, suspicions, hatreds, conflicts, and what not. Christ has come to deal with this spiritual background, and lay a new foundation of a oneness which is deeper than intellect or emotion.

If there is one element in the seventeenth of John more than another, surely it is the spirit of selfless humility. It is just as important - if not more so - to get into the spirit of this chapter as into the words, and this humility so deeply breathed is the key to all the teaching. It is the offset to the pride which is the world-spirit, and from which the disciples themselves needed deliverance. Pride is the root and cause of all divisions. There has never yet been an external rift amongst the Lord's people which did not have its source in pride somewhere. Pride blinds. Pride therefore provides a ground for deception. Often this deception makes the proud believe that they are the humblest and most selfless. Pride's firstborn is jealousy, and jealousy tears in fragments and gets on with no one.

The spirit of subjection to Christ as Christ is subject to the Father is the most potent force in fellowship. A "holding fast the Head" as Head is a vital law of the "Body" of Christ, for thus all the members find their oneness.

Thus when the Lord Jesus prayed this great "Father Glorify," He linked it with "The Hour" when by the Cross, through utter consecration to the will of the Father, in the power of an endless life, "through the eternal spirit," He met the great archenemy of God and His ultimate purpose for a people out of whom all the discord and enmity is utterly eliminated, and who live in a love which has been made perfect: and He secured that end when He destroyed the works of the devil by His Cross.

The means by which that testimony is veiled are legion, but in every case the contradiction is by reason of something either less than or extra to that Divine Life and its operations.

When "movements" as the enterprises of men take the place of the spontaneous movement of the Spirit of God; when teaching as such moves in advance of real spiritual hunger and becomes merely mental; when men become the centre of an encirclement instead of the Lord Jesus; when even a "testimony" is more than "The Person" of the Lord; then divisions are bound to come. Thus we arrive at the supreme note of John seventeen, "Father, glorify Thy Son." Only as He is the object of all glory, Sovereign Head, with all things coming up to Him, can the oneness be realised and manifested. For this the believer as such, as man, woman, worker, preacher, or in any other capacity, must know the Cross as having slain them, and everything be "henceforth unto Him." The prayer of this wonderful chapter follows immediately upon a forecasting of the scattering of the whole company of the disciples, and is a prayer for a regathering beyond that, upon such a basis as will be more secure than at present. That scattering was because they were all "offended" (Matt. 26:31, John 16:1). That offence was occasioned by personal disappointment. Such disappointment would have been impossible if there had not been false motives, false expectations, and a wrong spirit. All these were manifested by a frequent concern for their own personal interests. It was "my position," "my ministry," "my rights," etc.

It was when "no one called the things that he possessed his own" that a spirit prevailed which afforded Christ His supreme opportunity for being glorified. That spirit must extend to everything in life, ministry, position, salvation, revelation. All must be held for Christ and to Him.

## **7. The Cost of the Ultimate Purpose.**

Finally we come to Matthew 26:45. "Sleep on now and take your rest, the hour is come."

It is significant that following upon a prayer for oneness and fellowship in and with Himself, so deep and strong that "neither life nor death, height nor depth, things present nor things to come" could destroy, the Lord should find Himself without a single wakeful helper in the hour of His deepest need. He is going to have His heart's desire, but on the one hand He has to pay the price, and on the other something has to be done to get it on the stable rock of the Divine and off this insecure sand of the human.

He must "tread the winepress alone," this is where they "cannot follow Him now." They did not yet realise what was going on. The mighty issues were not perceived by them. He alone knew all that was involved, and while His human nature cried out for companionship and co-operation, He and only He could go those "few steps further," to that deep "yonder." He was tasting a desolation essential to His office and work which no other one need ever taste in the same measure. There is a fellowship, however, in His sufferings which, while not being of an atoning character, relates to the outworking of what He has done.

As with Him, so with His servants, one of the deepest points and the greatest costs is loneliness. The loneliness where no one else is able to appreciate what is going on, what God is doing, what is the meaning of the strange features which are apparent.

Before there can be true fellowship and oneness in the great *spiritual* realities, a fellowship of a lesser sort has to break down, and then ensues this costly isolation before eyes begin to be opened,



and understanding is given. There will then come into being a fellowship over which death has no power.

The price of leadership in these things is terrible loneliness, but the end makes it worth while.

He who was cut off from the last human companion in the Garden is at length seen encompassed by "a great multitude which no man can number out of every nation, and tribe, and peoples, and tongues." Any loneliness which may come to us in fellowship with Him now will not issue in our having a company of our own, but something far greater; it will have helped in the securing for the Lamb that was slain, the reward of His sufferings. It will be an ample reward for us to be standing by and with increasing intensity and emphasis cry:

"Crown *Him!* Crown Him!!  
Angels Crown *Him!!!*  
Crown the Saviour King of kings.

"Bring forth the royal diadem,  
And Crown Him Lord of All."