

ILLUSTRATION AND APPLICATION

"Ye both know me and ye know whence I am," v. 28. They knew that He was the carpenter's son, the peasant of Nazareth. They did not know, but they might have known, that He was born in Bethlehem according to the Scriptures. Much less did they know anything of His divine origin. We, too, may have an intellectual understanding of the facts of Christianity, and yet may have no real knowledge of Jesus. The facts of theology stored up in the mind may never affect the life. But faith in Jesus brings the true knowledge. It has a vitalizing touch. It changes the facts of theology into living forces in the life.

I knew an aged Christian lady who had lost three sons. One was drowned in the waters of Lake Erie. Another perished in the Atlantic. A third died in a New York hospital. I visited her one day, and ventured to speak of her sorrow. For a moment she said nothing; then she lifted up her face, that showed the marks of grief, and said, through her tears: "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him." That was the knowledge of God which faith brings. It is the knowledge which is eternal life. It is a knowledge that the Pharisees never possessed.

"And many of the people believed in him," v. 31. This is the bright side of the picture. It is a gleam of sunshine through the clouds. It is a star shining in the night of unbelief. How it must have cheered the heart of Jesus to see the light of faith, though dim. The faith of those who believed on Him was defective; but Jesus never rejected any because of the weakness of their faith. He could not grant a blessing without faith; but, however feeble was the voice of faith, He was ever ready to hear, and, however weak the hand of faith, he was ever willing to fill it. He is the same to-day. He never changes. Have faith in God.

A little girl who was blind was taken from the arms of her father by another. She was perfectly content. The father asked: "Do you know who has you?" She answered: "No, I do not, but I know that you do." Let us trust the knowledge and goodness of Jesus even where we cannot see.

"The Pharisees heard the multitudes murmuring these things," v. 32. They heard and they were displeased. They would not believe them-

selves, and they were offended when others believed. What an awful commentary upon the hardness of the natural heart! They even prided themselves upon being surpassingly religious. But their creed was without a life to correspond, and their profession without character. The religion of the Pharisee was on the surface. It was like the Polar sea, of which Nansen tells us, which sometimes had fresh water upon the surface, but a few feet down was brine. We want more than a surface religion. What a man is in his heart will come to the surface in testing times. And if the heart is not sweet with the spirit of Jesus it will be bitter with the brine of sin.

"Yet a little while am I with you," v. 33. Jesus tenderly pleads with them to take advantage of His presence while they have the opportunity of doing so. How pathetic is His appeal: I am only to be with you a little while; make the most of your privilege.

"Once to every man and nation
Comes the moment to decide."

There are great moments in life when we stand at the parting of the ways. The voice of conscience, which is the voice of God, calls one way, the voice of the world, the other way. And perhaps there is a flower too many, or a voice too sweet, and the fatal choice is taken to the undoing of the soul. And even if one struggles back into the right way, something is lost that he may never recover. Browning is right:

"Life's business is just the terrible choice."

"Ye shall seek me and shall not find me," v. 34.

How fearfully were these words fulfilled forty years later when, in the destruction of their city, they vainly looked for the Messiah to save them from their enemies! How sad when an opportunity is lost forever! How pathetic the story of the aged Carlyle standing beside the grave of his wife, whose life he might have made happier, and murmuring to himself: "If I had known! If I had known!" It is sad to lose an opportunity forever; but how incomparably sad to lose God forever! "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found. Call ye upon Him while He is near." It is well said by Bishop Ryle that "True repentance is never late; but late repentance is seldom true." The words of the same