**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**MARK-066**. **IS IT I? by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"Is it I?"*

*Mark 14:19*

The scene shows that Judas had not as yet drawn any suspicion on himself.

Here the Apostles seem to be higher than their ordinary stature; for they do not take to questioning one another, or even to protest, No!but to questioning Christ.

**I. The solemn prophecy.**

It seems strange at first sight that our Lord should have introduced such thoughts then, disturbing the sweet repose of that hallowed hour. But the terrible fact of the betrayal was naturally suggested by the emblems of His death, and still more by the very confiding familiarity of that hour. His household were gathered around Him, and the more close and confidential the intercourse, the bitterer that thought to Him, that one of the little band was soon to play the traitor. It is the cry of His wounded love, the wail of His unrequited affection, and, so regarded, is infinitely touching. It is an instance of that sad insight into man's heart which in His divinity He possessed. What a fountain of sorrow for His manhood was that knowledge! how it increases the pathos of His tenderness! Not only did He read hearts as they thought and felt in the present, but He read their future with more than a prophet's insight. He saw how many buds of promise would shrivel, how many would go away and walk no more with Him.

That solemn prophecy may well be pondered by all Christian assemblies, and specially when gathered for the observance of the Lord's Supper. Perhaps never since that first institution has a community met to celebrate it without Him who walks amid the candlesticks, with eyes as a flame of fire marking a Judas among the disciples. There is, I think, no doubt that Judas partook of the Lord's Supper. But be that as it may, he was among the number, and our Lord knew him to be the traitor.

In its essence Judas's sin can be repeated still, and the thought of that possibility may well mingle with the grateful and adoring contemplations suitable to the act of partaking of the Lord's Supper. In the hour of holiest Christian emotion the thought that I may betray the Lord who has died for me will be especially hateful, and to remember the possibility then will do much to prevent its ever becoming a reality.

**II. The self-distrustful question, Is it I?**

It suggests that the possibilities of the darkest sin are in each of us, and especially, that the sin of treason towards Christ is in each of us.

Think generally of the awful possibilities of sin in every soul.

All sin has one root, so it is capable of passing from one form to another as light, heat, and motion do, or like certain diseases that are Protean in their forms. One sin is apt to draw others after it. None shall want her mate. Wild beasts of the desertmeet with wild beasts of the islands. Sins are gregarious, as it were; they hunt in couples. Then goeth he, and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself.

The roots of all sin are in each. Men may think that they are protected from certain forms of sin by temperament, but identity of nature is deeper than varieties of temperament. The greatest sins are committed by yielding to very common motives. Love of money is not a rare feeling, but it led Judas to betray Jesus. Anger is thought to be scarcely a sin at all, but it often moves an arm to murder.

Temptations to each sin are round us all. We walk in a tainted atmosphere.

There is progress in evil. No man reaches the extreme of depravity at a bound. Judas's treachery was of slow growth.

So still there is the constant operation and pressure of forces and tendencies drawing us away from Jesus Christ. We, every one of us, know that, if we allowed our nature to have its way, we should leave Him and make shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience. The forms in which we might do it might vary, but do it we should. We are like a man desperately clutching some rocky projection on the face of a precipice, who knows that if once he lets go, he will be dashed to pieces. There goes John Bradford, but for the grace of God!But for this same restraining grace, to what depths might we not sink? So, in all Christian hearts there should be profound consciousness of their own weakness. The man who fears no fallis sure to have one. It is perilous to march through an enemy's country in loose order, without scouts and rearguard. Rigorous control is ever necessary. Brotherly judgment, too, of others should result from our consciousness of weakness. Examples of others falling are not to make us say cynically, We are all alike, but to set us to think humbly of ourselves, and to supplicate divine keeping, Lord, save me, or I perish!

**III. The safety of the self-distrustful.**

When the consciousness of possible falling is brought home to us, we shall carry, if we are wise, all our doubts as to ourselves to Jesus. There is safety in asking Him, Is it I?To bare our inmost selves before Him, and not to shrink, even if that piercing gaze lights on hidden meannesses and incipient treachery, may be painful, but is healing. He will keep us from yielding to the temptation of which we are aware, and which we tell frankly to Him. The lowly sense of our own liability to fall, if it drives us closer to Him, will make it certain that we shall not fall.

While the other disciples asked Is it I?John asked Who is it?The disciple who leaned on Christ's bosom was bathed in such a consciousness of Christ's love that treason against it was impossible. He, alone of the Evangelists, records his question, and he tells us that he put it, leaning back as he was, on Jesus's breast. For the purpose of whispering his interrogation, he changed his attitude for a moment so as to press still closer to Jesus. How could one who was thus nestling nearer to that heart be the betrayer? The consciousness of Christ's love, accompanied with the effort to draw closer to Him, is our surest defence against every temptation to faithlessness or betrayal of Him.

Any other fancied ground of security is deceptive, and will sooner or later crumble beneath our deceived feet. On this very occasion, Peter built a towering fabric of profession of unalterable fidelity on such shifting ground, and saw it collapse into ruin in a few hours. Let us profit by the lesson! That wholesome consciousness of our weakness need not shade with sadness the hours of communion, but it may well help us to turn them to their highest use in making them occasions for lowlier self-distrust and closer cleaving to Him. If we thus use our sense of weakness, the sweet security will enter our souls that belongs to those who have trusted in the great promise: He shall not fall, for God Is able to make him stand. The blessed ones who are kept from falling and presented faultless before the presence of His glory, will hear with wonder the voice of the Judge ascribing to them deeds of service to Him of which they had not been conscious, and will have to ask once more the old question, but with a new meaning: Lord, is it I? when saw we Thee an hungered, and fed Thee?