

Lovest Thou Me?

A Sermon

(No. 117)

Delivered on Sabbath Morning, September 7th, 1856, by the

REV. C.H. SPURGEON

At New Park Street Chapel, Southwark.

“Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, Lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.”—[John 21:15-17](#).

How very much like to Christ before his crucifixion was Christ after his resurrection! Although he had lain in the grave, and descended into the regions of the dead, and had retraced his steps to the land of the living, yet how marvellously similar he was in his manners and how unchanged in his disposition. His passion, his death, and his resurrection, could not alter his character as a man any more than they could affect his attributes as God. He is Jesus for ever the same. And when he appeared again to his disciples, he had cast aside none of his kind manners; he had not lost a particle of interest in their welfare; he addressed them just as tenderly as before, and called them his children and his friends. Concerning their temporal condition he was mindful, for he said, “Children, have ye any meat?” And he was certainly quite as watchful over their spiritual state, for after he had supplied their bodies by a rich draught from the sea, with fish, (which possibly he had created for the occasion), he enquires after their souls’ health and prosperity, beginning with the one who might be supposed to have been in the most sickly condition, the one who had denied his Master thrice, and wept bitterly—even Simon Peter. “Simon, son of Jonas,” said Jesus, “lovest thou me?”

Without preface, for we shall have but little time this morning—may God help us to make good use of it!—we shall mention three things: first *a solemn question*—“Lovest thou me?” secondly, a *discreet answer*, “Yes, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee;” and thirdly, a *required demonstration of the fact*, “He saith unto him, Feed my lambs;” or, again, “Feed my sheep.”

I. First, then, here was A SOLEMN QUESTION, which our Saviour put to Peter, not for his own information, for, as Peter said, “Thou knowest that I love thee,” but for Peter’s examination. It is well, especially after a foul sin, that the Christian should well probe the

wound. It is right that he should examine himself; for sin gives grave cause for suspicion, and it would be wrong for a Christian to live an hour with a suspicion concerning his spiritual estate, unless he occupy that hour in examination of himself. Self-examination should more especially follow sin, though it ought to be the daily habit of every Christian, and should be practised by him perpetually. Our Saviour, I say, asked this question of Peter, that he might ask it of himself; so we may suppose it asked of us this morning that we may put it to our own hearts. Let each one ask himself then, in his Saviour's name, for his own profit, "Lovest thou the Lord? Lovest thou the Saviour? Lovest thou the ever-blessed Redeemer?"

Note what this question was. *It was a question concerning Peter's love.* He did not say, "Simon, son of Jonas, fearest thou me." He did not say, "Dost thou admire me? Dost thou adore me?" Nor was it even a question concerning his faith. He did not say, "Simon, son of Jonas, believest thou in me?" but he asked him another question, "Lovest thou me?" I take it, that is because love is the very best evidence of piety. Love is the brightest of all the graces; and hence it becomes the best evidence. I do not believe love to be superior to faith; I believe faith to be the groundwork of our salvation; I think faith to be the mother grace, and love springs from it; faith I believe to be the root grace, and love grows from it. But, then, faith is not an evidence for brightness equal to love. Faith, if we have it, is a sure and certain sign that we are God's children; and so is every other grace a sure and certain one, but many of them cannot be seen by others. Love is a more sparkling one than any other. If I have a true fear of God in my heart, then am I God's child; but since fear is a grace that is more dim and hath not that halo of glory over it that love has, love becomes one of the very best evidences and one of the easiest signs of discerning whether we are alive to the Saviour. He that lacketh love, must lack also every other grace in the proportion in which he lacketh love. If love be little, I believe it is a sign that faith is little; for he that believeth much loveth much. If love be little, fear will be little, and courage for God will be little; and whatsoever graces there be, though faith lieth at the root of them all, yet do they so sweetly hang on love, that if love be weak, all the rest of the graces most assuredly will be so. Our Lord asked Peter, then, that question, "Lovest thou me?"

And note, again, that *he did not ask Peter anything about his doings.* He did not say, "Simon Peter, how much hast thou wept? How often hast thou done penance on account of thy great sin? How often hast thou on thy knees sought mercy at my hand for the slight thou hast done to me, and for that terrible cursing and swearing wherewith thou didst disown thy Lord, whom thou hadst declared thou wouldst follow even to prison and to death?" No; it was not in reference to his works, but in reference to the state of his heart that Jesus said, "Lovest thou me?" To teach us this; that though works do follow after a sincere love, yet love excelleth the works, and works without love are not evidences worth having. We may have some tears; but they are not the tears that God shall accept, if there be no love to him. We may have some works; but they are not acceptable works, if they are not done out of

love to his person. We may perform very many of the outward, ritual observances of religion; but unless love lieth at the bottom, all these things are vain and useless. The question, then, "Lovest thou me?" is a very vital question; far more so than one that merely concerns the outward conduct. It is a question that goes into the very heart, and in such a way that it brings the whole heart to one question; for if love be wrong, everything else is wrong. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

Ah! dear beloved, we have very much cause for asking ourselves this question. If our Saviour were no more than a man like ourselves, he might often doubt whether we love him at all. Let me just remind you of sundry things which give us very great cause to ask this question: "Lovest thou me?" I will deal only with the last week. Come, my Christian brother, look at thine own conduct. Do not thy sins make thee doubt whether thou dost love thy Master? Come, look over the sins of this week: when thou wast speaking with an angry word and with a sullen look, might not thy Lord have touched thee, and said, "Lovest thou me?" When thou wast doing such-and-such a thing, which thou right well knewest in thy conscience was not according to his precept, might he not have said, "Lovest thou me?" Canst thou not remember the murmuring word because something had gone wrong with thee in business this week, and thou wast speaking ill of the God of providence for it? Oh, might not the loving Saviour, with pity in his languid eye, have said to thee, "What, speak thus? Lovest thou me?" I need not stop to mention the various sins of which ye have been guilty. Ye have sinned, I am sure, enough to give good ground for self-suspicion, if ye did not still hang on this; that his love to you, not your love to him, is the seal of your discipleship. Oh, do you not think within yourselves, "If I had loved him more, should I have sinned so much? And oh, can I love him when I have broken so many of his commandments! Have I reflected his glorious image to the world as I should have done? Have I not wasted many hours within this week that I might have spent in winning souls to him? Have I not thrown away many precious moments in light and frivolous conversation which I might have spent in earnest prayer? Oh! how many words have I uttered, which if they have not been filthy, (as I trust they have not) yet have not been such as have ministered grace to the hearers? Oh, how many follies have I indulged in? How many sins have I winked at? How many crimes have I covered over? How have I made my Saviour's heart to bleed? How have I done dishonor to his cause? How have I in some degree disgraced my heart's profession of love to him?" Oh, ask these questions of thyself, beloved, and say, "Is this thy kindness to thy Friend?"

But I hope this week has been one wherein thou hast sinned little openly as to the world, or even in thine own estimation, as to open acts of crime. But now let me put another question to thee, *Does not thy worldliness make thee doubt?* How hast thou been occupied with the world, from Monday morning to the last hour of Saturday night? Thou hast scarce had time to think of him. What corners hast thou pushed thy Jesus into, to make room for

thy bales of goods? How hast thou stowed him away into one short five minutes, to make room for thy ledger or thy day-book? How little time hast thou given to him! Thou hast been occupied with the shop, with the exchange, and the farmyard; and thou hast had little time to commune with him! Come, just think! remember any one day this week; canst thou say that thy goal always flew upward with passionate desires to him? Didst thou pant like a hart for thy Saviour during the week. Nay, perhaps there was a whole day went by, and thou scarcely thoughtest of him till the winding up of it; and then thou couldst only upbraid thyself, “How have I forgotten Christ to-day? I have not beheld his person; I have not walked with him; I have not done as Enoch did! I knew he would come into the shop with me; I knew he is such a blessed Christ that he would stand behind the counter with me; I knew he was such a joyous Lord Jesus that he would walk through the market with me! but I left him at home, and forgot him all the day long.” Surely, surely, beloved, when thou rememberest thy worldliness, thou must say of thyself, “O Lord, thou mightest well ask, ‘Lovest thou me?’”

Consider again, I beseech thee, *how cold thou hast been this week at the mercy-seat*. Thou hast been there, for thou canst not live without it; thou hast lifted up thy heart in prayer, for thou art a Christian, and prayer is as necessary to thee as thy breath. But oh! with what a poor asthmatic breath hast thou lived this week! How little hast thou breathed? Dost not remember how hurried was thy prayer on Monday morning, how driven thou wast on Tuesday night? Canst thou not recollect how languid was thy heart, when on another occasion thou wast on thy knees? Thou hast had little wrestling, mayhap, this week; little agonising; thou hast had little of the prayer which prevaieth; thou hast scarcely laid hold of the horns of the altar; thou hast stood in the distance, and seen the smoke at the altar, but thou hast not laid hold of the horns of it. Come, ask thyself, do not thy prayers make thee doubt? I say, honestly before you all, my own prayers often make me doubt; and I know nothing that gives me more grave cause of disquietude. When I labour to pray—oh! that rascally devil!—fifty thousand thoughts he tries to inject, to take me off from prayer; and when I will and must pray, oh, what an absence there is of that burning fervent desire; and when I would come right close to God, when I would weep my very eyes out in penitence, and would believe and take the blessing, oh, what little faith and what little penitence there is! Verily, I have thought that prayer has made me more unbelieving than anything else. I could believe over the tops of my sins, but sometimes I can scarcely believe over the tops of my prayers—for oh! how cold is prayer when it is cold! Of all things that are bad when cold, I think prayer is the worst, for it becomes like a very mockery, and instead of warming the heart, it makes it colder than it was before, and seems even to damp its life and spirit, and fills it full of doubts whether it is really a heir of heaven and accepted of Christ. Oh! look at thy cold prayers, Christian, and say is not thy Saviour right to ask this question very solemnly, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?”

But stop, again; just one more word for thee to reflect upon. Perhaps thou hast had much prayer. and this has been a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. But yet, mayhap, thou knowest, thou hast not gone so far this week as thou mightest have done, in another exercise of godliness that is even better than prayer, I mean *communion and fellowship*. Oh! beloved, thou hast this week had but little sitting under the apple tree, and finding its shadow great delight to thee. Thou hast not gone much this week to the banqueting house, and had its banner of love over thee. Come, bethink thyself, how little hast thou seen thy Lord this week! Perhaps he has been absent the greater part of the time; and hast thou not groaned? hast thou not wept? hast thou not sighed after him? Sure, then, thou canst not have loved him as thou shouldst, else thou couldst not have borne his absence; thou couldst not have endured it calmly, if thou hadst the affection for him a sanctified spirit has for its Lord. Thou didst have one sweet visit from him in the week, and why didst thou let him go? Why didst thou not constrain him to abide with thee? Why didst thou not lay hold of the skirts of his garment, and say, “Why shouldst thou be like a wayfaring man, and as one that turneth aside, and tarrieth for a night? Oh! my lord, thou shalt dwell with me; I will keep thee; I will detain thee in my company; I cannot let thee go; I love thee, and I will constrain thee to dwell with me this night and the next day; long as I can keep thee, will I keep thee.” But no; thou wast foolish; thou didst let him go. Oh! soul, why didst thou not lay hold of his arm, and say, “I will not let thee go.” But thou didst lay hold on him so feebly, thou didst suffer him to depart so quickly, he might have turned round, and said to thee, as he said to Simon, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?”

Now, I have asked you all these questions, because I have been asking them of myself. I feel that I must answer to nearly every one of them, “Lord, there is great cause for me to ask myself that question;” and I think that most of you, if you are honest to yourselves, will say the same. I do not approve of the man that says, “I know I love Christ, and I never have a doubt about it;” because we often have reason to doubt ourselves; a believer’s strong faith is not a strong faith in his own love to Christ—it is a strong faith in Christ’s love to him. There is no faith which always believes that it loves Christ. Strong faith has its conflicts; and a true believer will often wrestle in the very teeth of his own feelings. Lord, if I never did love thee, nevertheless, if I am not a saint, I am a sinner. Lord, I still believe; help thou mine unbelief. The disciple can believe, when he feels no love; for he can believe that Christ loveth the soul; and when he hath no evidence he can come to Christ without evidence, and lay, hold of him, just as he is, with naked faith, and still hold fast by him. Though he see not his signs, though he walk in darkness and there be no light, still may he trust in the Lord, and stay upon his God;—but to be certain at all times that we love the Lord is quite another matter; about this we have need continually to question ourselves, and most scrupulously to examine both the nature and the extent of our evidences.

II. And now I come to the second thing, which is A DISCREET ANSWER. “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” Simon gave a very good answer. Jesus asked him, in the first place, whether he loved him better than others. Simon would not say that: he had once been a little proud—more than a little—and thought he was better than the other disciples. But this time he evaded that question; he would not say that he loved better than others. And I am sure there is no loving heart that will think it loves even better than the least of God’s children. I believe the higher a man is in grace, the lower he will be in his own esteem; and he will be the last person to claim any supremacy over others in the divine grace of love to Jesus. But mark how Simon Peter did answer: he did not answer as to the quantity but as to the quality of his love. He would aver that he loved Christ, but not that he loved Christ better than others. “Lord, I cannot say how much I love thee; but thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I do love thee. So far I can aver: as to the quantity of my love, I cannot say much about it.”

But just notice, again, the discreet manner in which Peter answered. Some of us, if we had been asked that question, would have answered foolishly. We should have said, “Lord, I have preached for thee so many times this week; Lord, I have distributed of my substance to the poor this week. Blessed be thy name, thou hast given me grace to walk humbly, faithfully, and honestly and therefore, Lord, I think I can say, ‘I love thee.’” We should have brought forward our good works before our Master, as being the evidences of our love; we should have said, “Lord, thou hast seen me during this week; as Nehemiah did of old, “Forget not my good works. O Lord, I thank thee; I know they are thy gifts, but I think they are proofs of my love.” That would have been a very good answer if we had been questioned by our fellow man, and he had said, “You do not always love your Saviour;” but it would be foolish for us to tell the Master that. Peter’s answer was wise; “Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.” You know the Master might have said to Peter, had he appealed to his works, “Yes, thou mayest preach, and yet not love me; thou mayest pray, after a fashion, and yet not love me; thou mayest do all these works, and yet have no love to me. I did not ask thee what are the evidences of thy love, I asked thee the fact of it.” Very likely all my dear friends here would not have answered in the fashion I have supposed; but they would have said, “Love thee Lord? Why, my heart is all on fire towards thee; I feel as if I could go to prison and to death for thee! Sometimes, when I think of thee, my heart is ravished with bliss; and when thou art absent, O Lord, I moan and cry like a dove that has lost its mate. Yes, I feel I love thee, O my Christ.” But that would have been very foolish, because although we may often rejoice in our own feelings—they are joyful things—it would not do to plead them with our Lord, for he might answer, “Ah! thou feelest joyful at the mention of my name. So, no doubt, has many a deluded one, because he had a fictitious faith, and a fancied hope in Christ; therefore the name of Christ seemed to gladden him. Thou sayest, ‘I have felt dull when thou hast been absent.’ That might have been accounted for from natural circumstances;

you had a headache, perhaps, or some other ailment. ‘But,’ sayest thou, ‘I felt so happy when he was present that I thought I could die.’ Ah! in such manner Peter had spoken many a time before; but a sorry mess he made of it when he trusted his feelings; for he would have sunk into the sea but for Christ; and eternally damned his soul, if it had not been for his grace, when, with cursing and swearing he thrice denied his Lord. But no, Peter was wise; he did not bring forward his frames and feelings, nor did he bring his evidences: though they are good in themselves, he did not bring them before Christ. But, as though he shall say, “Lord, I appeal to thine omnipotence. I am not going to tell thee that the volume of my heart must contain such-and-such matter, because there is such-and-such a mark on its cover; for, Lord, thou canst read inside of it; and, therefore, I need not tell thee what the title is, nor read over to thee the index of the contents. Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.”

Now, could we, this morning, dear friends, give such an answer as that to the question? If Christ should come here, if he were now to walk down these aisles, and along the pews, could we appeal to his own divine Omniscience, his infallible knowledge of our hearts, that we all love him? There is a test-point between a hypocrite and a real Christian. If thou art a hypocrite, thou mightest say, “Lord, my minister knows that I love thee; Lord, the deacons know that I love thee; they think I do, for they have given me a ticket; the members think I love thee; for they see me sitting at thy table; my friends think I love thee, for they often hear me talk about thee.” But thou couldst not say, “Lord, thou knowest that I love thee;” thine own heart is witness that thy secret works belie thy confession, for thou art without prayer in secret; and thou canst preach a twenty minutes’ prayer in public. Thou art niggardly and parsimonious in giving to the cause of Christ; but thou canst sport thy name to be seen. Thou art an angry, petulant creature; but when thou comest to the house of God, thou hast a pious whine, and talkest like a canting hypocrite, as if thou wert a very gentlemanly man, and never seemed angry. Thou canst take thy Maker’s name in vain; but if thou hear another do it thou wouldst be mighty severe upon him. Thou affectest to be very pious, and yet if men knew of that widow’s house that is sticking in thy throat, and of that orphan’s patrimony which thou hast taken from him, thou wouldst leave off trumpeting thy good deeds. Thine own heart tells thee thou art a liar before God. But thou, O sincere Christian, thou canst welcome thy Lord’s question, and answer it with holy fear and gracious confidence. Yes, thou mayest welcome the question. Such a question was never put to Judas. The Lord loved Peter so much that he was jealous over him, or he never would have thus challenged his attachment. And in this kind doth he often appeal to the affections of those whom he dearly loves. The response likewise is recorded for thee, “Lord, thou knowest all things.” Canst thou not look up, though scorned by men, though even rejected by thy minister, though kept back by the deacons, and looked upon with disesteem by some—canst thou not look up, and say, “Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee?” Do it not in brag and bravado; but if you can do it sincerely, be happy, bless God that he has given you a sincere

love to the Saviour, and ask him to increase it from a spark to a flame, and from a grain to a mountain. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Yea, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

III. And now here is A DEMONSTRATION REQUIRED—"Feed my lambs: feed my sheep." That was Peter's demonstration. It is not necessary that it should be our way of showing our love. There are different ways for different disciples. There are some who are not qualified to feed lambs, for they are only little lambs themselves. There are some that could not feed sheep, for they cannot at present see afar off; they are weak in the faith, and not qualified to teach at all. They have other means, however, of showing their love to the Saviour. Let us offer a few words upon this matter.

"Lovest thou me?" Then one of the best evidences thou canst give is *to feed my lambs*. Have I two or three little children that love and fear my name? If thou wantest to do a deed, which shall show that thou art a true lover, and not a proud pretender; go and feed them. Are there a few little ones whom I have purchased with my blood in an infant class? Dost thou want to do something which shall evidence that thou art indeed mine? Then sit not down with the elders, dispute not in the temple; I did that myself; but go thou, and sit down with the young orphans, and teach them the way to the kingdom. "Feed my lambs."

Dearly beloved, I have been of late perplexing myself with one thought: that our church-government is not scriptural. It is scriptural as far as it goes; but it is not according to the whole of Scripture; neither do we practise many excellent things that ought to be practised in our churches. We have received into our midst a large number of young persons; in the ancient churches there was what was called the catechism class—I believe there ought to be such a class now. The Sabbath-school, I believe, is in the Scripture; and I think there ought to be on the Sabbath afternoon, a class of the young people of this church, who are members already, to be taught by some of the elder members. Now-a-days, when we get the lambs, we just turn them adrift in the meadow, and there we leave them. There are more than a hundred young people in this church who positively, though they are members, ought not to be left alone; but some of our elders, if we have elders, and some who ought to be ordained elders, should make it their business to teach them further, to instruct them in the faith, and so keep them hard and fast by the truth of Jesus Christ. If we had elders, as they had in all the apostolic churches, this might in some degree be attended to. But now the hands of our deacons are full, they do much of the work of the eldership, but they cannot do any more than they are doing, for they are toiling hard already. I would that some here whom God has gifted, and who have time, would spend their afternoons in taking a class of those who live around them, of their younger brethren, asking them to their houses for prayer and pious instruction, that so the lambs of the flock may be fed. By God's help I will take care of the sheep; I will endeavour under God to feed them, as well as I can, and preach the gospel to them. You that are older in the faith and stronger in it, need not that careful cautious feeding

which is required by the lambs. But there are many in our midst, good pious souls who love the Saviour as much as the sheep do; but one of their complaints which I have often heard is, "Oh I sir, I joined your church, I thought they would be all brothers and sisters to me, and that I could speak to them, and they would teach me and be kind to me. Oh ! sir, I came, and nobody spoke to me." I say, "Why did not you speak to them first ?" "Oh !" they reply, "I did not like." Well, they should have liked, I am well aware; but if we had some means of feeding the lambs, it would be a good way of proving to our Saviour and to the world, that we really do endeavour to follow him. I hope some of my friends will take that hint; and if, in concert with me, my brethren in office will endeavour to do something in that way, I think it will be no mean proof of their love to Christ. "Feed my lambs," is a great duty; let us try to practise it as we are able.

But, beloved, we cannot all do that; the lambs cannot feed the lambs; the sheep cannot feed the sheep exactly. There must be some appointed to these offices. And therefore, in the Saviour's name, allow me to say to some of you, that there are different kinds of proof you must give. "Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." Then preserve that prayer-meeting attend to it; see that it is kept going on, and that it does not fall to the ground. "Simon son of Jonas lovest thou me?" See to thy servants; see that they go to the house of God, and instruct them in the faith. There is a sister: Lovest thou Christ? "Yea, Lord." Perhaps it is as much as you can do—perhaps it is as much as you ought to do—to train up your children in the fear of the Lord. It is of no use to trouble yourselves about duties that God never meant you to do, and leave your own vineyard at home to itself. Just take care of your own children; perhaps that is as good a proof as Christ wants of you that you are feeding his lambs. You have your own office, to which Christ has appointed you: seek not to run away from it, but endeavour to do what you can to serve your Master therein. But, I beseech you, do something to prove your love; do not be sitting down doing nothing. Do not be folding your hands and arms, for such people perplex a minister most, and bring the most ruin on a church—such as do nothing. You are always the readiest to find fault. I have marked it here, that the very people who are quarrelling with everything are the people that are doing nothing, or are good for nothing. They are sure to quarrel with everything else, because they are doing nothing themselves; and therefore they have time to find fault with other people. Do not O Christian, say that thou lovest Christ, and yet do nothing for him. Doing is a good sign of living; and he can scarce be alive unto God that does nothing for God. We must let our works evidence the sincerity of our love to our Master. "Oh!" say you, "but we are doing a little." Can you do any more? If you can, then do it. If you cannot do more, then God requires no more of you; doing to the utmost of your ability is your best proof; but if you can do more, inasmuch as ye keep back any part of what ye can do, in that degree ye give cause to yourselves to distrust your love to Christ. Do all you can to your very utmost; serve him abundantly; ay, and superabundantly: seek

to magnify his name; and if ever you do too much for Christ, come and tell me of it; if you ever do too much for Christ, tell the angels of it—but you will never do that. He gave himself for you; give yourselves to him.

You see, my friends, how I have been directing you to search your own hearts, and I am almost afraid that some of you will mistake my intention. Have I a poor soul here who really deplores the langour of her affections? Perhaps you have determined to ask yourself as many questions as you can with a view of reviving the languid sparks of love. Let me tell you then that the pure flame of love must be always nourished where it was first kindled. When I admonished you to look to yourself it was only to detect the evil; would you find the remedy, you must direct your eyes, not to your own heart, but to the blessed heart of Jesus—to the Beloved one—to my gracious Lord and Master. And wouldst thou be ever conscious of the sweet swellings up of thy heart towards him; thou canst only prove this by a constant sense of his tender love to thee. I rejoice to know that the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of love, and the ministry of the Spirit is endeared to me in nothing so much as this, that he takes of the things of Jesus, and shows them to me, spreading abroad the Saviour's love in my heart, until it constrains all my passions, awakens the tenderest of all tender emotions, reveals my union to him, and occasions my strong desire to serve him. Let not love appear to thee as a stern duty, or an arduous effort; rather look to Jesus, yield thyself up to his gracious charms till thou art ravished with his beauty and preciousness. But ah! if thou art slack in the proofs thou givest, I shall know thou art not walking with him in holy communion.

And allow me to suggest one profitable way of improving the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. That is: while you are partaking of it, my friends, renew your dedication to Christ. Seek this morning to give yourselves over afresh to your Master. Say with your hearts, what I shall now say with my lips: "Oh I my precious Lord Jesus, I do love thee; thou knowest I have in some degree given myself to thee up to this time, thanks to thy grace! Blessed be thy name, that thou hast accepted the deeds of so unworthy a servant. O Lord, I am conscious that I have not devoted myself to thee as I ought; I know that in many things I have come short. I will make no resolution to live better to thine honor, but I will offer the prayer that thou wouldst help me so to do. Oh! Lord, I give to thee my health, my life, my talents, my power, and all I have! Thou hast bought me, and bought me wholly: then, Lord, take me this morning, baptize me in the Spirit; let me now feel an entire affection to thy blessed person. May I have that love which conquers sin and purifies the soul—that love which can dare danger and encounter difficulties for thy sake. May I henceforth and for ever be a consecrated vessel of mercy, having been chosen of thee from before the foundation of the world! Help me to hold fast that solemn choice of thy service which I desire this morning, by thy grace to renew." And when you drink the blood of Christ, and eat his flesh spiritually—in the type and in the emblem, then I beseech you, let the solemn recollection of his

agony and suffering for you inspire you with a greater love, that you may be more devoted to his service than ever. If that be done, I shall have the best of churches; if that be done by us, the Holy Spirit helping us to carry it out, we shall all be good men and true, holding fast by him, and we shall not need to be ashamed in the awful day.

As for you that have never given yourselves to Christ, I dare not tell you to renew a vow which you have never made, nor dare I ask you to make a vow, which you would never keep. I can only pray for you, that God the Saviour would be pleased to reveal himself unto your heart, that “a sense of blood-bought pardon” may “dissolve your hearts of stone;” that you may be brought to give yourselves to him, knowing that if you have done that, you have the best proof that he has given himself for you. May God Almighty bless you: those of you who depart, may he dismiss with his blessing: and those who remain, may you receive his favour, for Christ’s sake! Amen.