

## Love at Its Utmost

Delivered on Lord's-day Morning, September 11th, 1887, by

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"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love." [John 15:9](#).

IN THE LOVE of Christ we find our best joy. The pastures of the Great Shepherd are wide, but the sweetest grasses grow close to his pierced feet. The love of Jesus is the center of salvation; it is as the sun in the midst of the heavens of grace. I trust that while I lead your meditations this morning towards this golden theme you will be able to enter in spirit into the heart and soul of it. Paul said, when he spake of marriage, "Behold, I show you a mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." There is always much that is mysterious here, but it is ever the mystery of love. You believe in this love; you know it; you have tasted it; and, therefore, I speak to an audience that will appreciate the subject, however faulty may be my handling of it.

Oh, for a higher experience! May the Lord at this hour conduct us into his banqueting-house, and rejoice us with his love, which is better than wine! Many of us will bring to the feast a keen appetite: this is all we can contribute, and even that is a gift of love. Oh, that we may have a quick eye to see the beauties of the Lord, and a discerning heart to perceive how his love to us enhances all his charms!

The love of Christ to his people is the sweetest, fullest, and most profitable theme that a preacher can bring before his people, and it is always a suitable and seasonable subject, whatever the condition of the congregation may be. But we greatly need the aid of the Holy Spirit to prepare our minds for the enjoyment of this truth. It is one thing to hear the outward sound of love, it is another thing to feel an inward sense of it. It is pleasant to hear the rippling of the brook; but if you are dying of thirst that silver music will not refresh you if you are unable to drink of the stream. Come, Holy Spirit, come! We beseech thee, take of the things of Christ, and glorify him by revealing them to our inmost souls!

I. We will plunge into the subject at once. Here is our first exhortation: LET US UNQUESTIONINGLY BELIEVE THAT JESUS LOVES US. That is to say, if we are indeed in him, he loves us infinitely. Our Lord is speaking here, not of his general love of benevolence, but of that peculiar and special affection which he bears to his own, of whom he says, "I have chosen you out of the world." If we are in him, as the branches are in the vine, and if we prove the reality of that union by bringing forth the fruits of grace to his glory, then we are the objects of the Savior's peculiar love. He speaks to us as a church, and to each one personally, and says, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." O my hearer, does he speak thus to thee? Hast thou taken hold of Christ by faith? Has he saved thee? Is thy life derived from him? Is he thy hope, thy joy, thine all? If this be so, then doubt not that he

speaks to thee with his own lips as well as out of this book of record. As truly as if he stood at thy side and grasped thy hand, and spoke, with his eyes looking into thine eyes with tenderness of love, he saith to thee, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love."

That he truly loves us, we may confidently believe; for he himself is at pains to assure us of it in so many words. He does not leave it to an inference, although the inference might be safely drawn from the ten thousand love-deeds of his life and death; but he deliberately declares his love: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." Do you doubt his words?—words spoken in the solemn night of his agony, and registered in the volume of inspiration? Does not your heart respond to him, as he says, "I have loved you"? Do you not answer, "Ay, Lord, it is true indeed! There is little need for thee to tell me this with thy lips, for thou hast assured me of it by thy wounds. I know that thou lovest me. Oh, that I loved thee better in return!"

As if to confirm us in our belief beyond all wavering, and to lead out our hearts to behold the largeness of his affection, he quotes a parallel to his love of the most extraordinary kind. He looks not to the loves of earth, but to the greatest love of heaven, and says, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you." Beloved, you do not, dare not, could not, doubt the love of the Father to his Son. It is one of those unquestionable truths about which you never dreamed of holding an argument. Our Lord would have us place his love to us in the same category with the Father's love to himself. We are to be as confident of the one as of the other. What a wonderful certainty is conveyed to us by this token! The Father regards with boundless love the Son, with whom he is in essential union, since they are one God; and as surely as this is the case, so surely does Jesus love the people whom he has taken into marriage union with himself for ever. Doubt not: it will be a sort of blasphemy to doubt after such a pledge as this. Think of it, and let your assurance become doubly sure.

Behold the course and proof of our Redeemer's love! *He chose us in love.* The reason of his choice was love. Remember how he puts it in the seventh chapter of Deuteronomy. God there speaks of his choice of Israel: "Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you." He loved you because he loved you. Election is based upon affection, and that affection is its own fountain. The whole system of divine love springs from the love of God, and from nothing else. Jesus loves us because he is love. If I must add anything to that statement, it will suffice me to quote the Well-beloved's own words: when he thanked the Father that he had hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes, he said, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." O believer, Jesus loved thee before the world began, and all because he would love thee. He loved thee in order that

he might manifest his love to thee. He loved thee in order that thou mightest be conformed unto his image, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren, and that thus we might share his nature and his character and his Father's love, and so draw nearer and nearer to him in ever-growing fellowship of affection. See the love which is its own cause spending its own self, and by its own efficacy working out its gracious purposes, every one of which is as full of love as the love which designed it.

Having thus chosen us for love, so great was the love of our Lord that *he became man for love of us*. He "counted it not robbery to be equal with God," but became man that he might carry out his purposes of love to us. It is written, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh," and this has its highest exemplification in Christ, who quitted his Father that he might become one flesh with his church. He took our nature, that so he might be able to do for us, and suffer for us, what else he could not have done and suffered. By thus talking upon himself our nature he established a nearer union and a sweeter fellowship with his beloved church than could otherwise have existed. If he had never become the babe of Bethlehem, and the man of Nazareth, how could he have been made in all points like unto his brethren? Think what that love must have been which brought the Lord of glory from the highest heaven to become the Man of sorrows for our sakes!

become a man for us, we remember that *Jesus died because of love*. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." That laying down of life in our Lord's case was specially a proof of love, for he died voluntarily; there was no necessity upon him, as upon us, to die. Other men, if they died for us, would but pay the debt of nature a little before its time; but Jesus died who needed not to die, so far as he himself was concerned. He died also amid circumstances of pain, and shame, and desertion, which made that death peculiarly bitter. The death of the cross is to us the highest proof of our Savior's infinite love to us. He must die the death of a felon, between two thieves, utterly friendless, the object of general ridicule; and this he must do as bearing our sins in his own body. All this makes us sag, "Behold how he loved us!" O beloved! can we doubt Christ's love, since he laid down his life, "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God"?

It was *because of this love*, remember, dear child of God, that *the Lord made thee live*. I cannot quote at full length that memorable passage in the sixteenth chapter of Ezekiel; but there you have our condition represented as that of a deserted infant cast out to die, unwashed, unswaddled, bleeding itself to death in filth and misery; and it is written that when the Lord passed by, he said unto that infant, "Live." Even thus did he speak to us, and we lived, and rose out of our misery. He declares that the time when he thus passed by was "a time of love." Shall I not touch your hearts when I remind you of the Lord's time of love to you? Remember your cast-out condition, your helpless distress, your hopeless ruin. You lay between the very jaws of death, and no one eye pitied you; you did not even pity yourself.

Jesus looked on you long before you looked to him. He spoke to you before you spoke to him. He said, "Live!" and you did live, but before that you were dead in trespasses and sins. Then he washed, clothed, beautified, and adopted you. He made a wretched foundling to be joint-heir with himself. O love! matchless love! We owe our spiritual life to love, and therefore as long as we live we will praise the Lover of our souls!

Inasmuch as we are by nature at a distance from God, we needed *to be brought nigh*. We have been brought near to him by love. Jeremiah hath a famous passage—"The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Do you remember when the bands of a man were fastened around you, and you felt the cords of love drawing more and more forcibly? You could not tell why you were so singularly inclined to better things, but it was so. In yourself you were at first lifeless as a log; but soon you began to feel a yielding, yes, and an inclination, and at last that stubborn will relented, and new desires took the place of former aversions. Then you ran in the way in which you were drawn: your will had at last been made truly free, so that you delighted in the will of God. Love did all this. Love was more than conqueror; for it did not vanquish the enemy by force, but turned him into a grateful friend. By the recollection of those drawings which have not ceased even now, let us believe in the love of Jesus. Do you not feel him drawing you even as you sit in this house of prayer? Then under a present sense of his love, cry out "The love of Christ constraineth us." I charge you, have no doubt about the love of your divine Lord which even now is working within you.

Time would fail me if I were to go into all the fruits of the love of Christ to you. For love he has forgiven you! Have you ever forgotten the blotting out of your iniquities by that hand of love? For love he has fed you day by day with the best of spiritual meat. "Ye are complete in him." All your wants his love has supplied: there are shoes for your pilgrimage, armor for your warfare, strength for your labor, rest for your weariness, comfort for your sorrow. No good thing does his love withhold. You have an inward satisfaction in Christ which all the world could not produce. Moreover, he has led you through this wilderness life in safety to this day. In dark and devious roads he has been near you; his rod and his staff have comforted you. You have not gone astray, and that not because there was not the spirit of straying in you, but because the great Shepherd has kept you in his paths. How often has he succoured you, and delivered you! How graciously has he helped your weakness, enlightened your darkness, allayed your fears, renewed your hope, and, above all, preserved you from sin! As I look back upon my own life, I am filled with adoring thankfulness. I know that the retrospect which each one of you is looking upon is very much the same. Surely, goodness and mercy have brightened all the days of our lives. Each day has been so wonderful, that if we had only lived that one day, we should have had cause to praise the Lord for ever and ever. When all the days are "threaded on time's string," what a bracelet of mercies they make! What shall I say of my Lord's love? If I liken it for height to the mountains,

I see Alps piled on Alps. "Thy mercy, O God, is in the heavens." If I liken it for depth to the sea, I am again lost in the comparison; I can only cry, "O the depths!" As to counting the gifts of his love, if we think of them, they are more in number than the sands of the sea. Let us not doubt his love, for that would be wanton cruelty; but sitting down in stillness of mind let our hearts quietly beat time to this one sentence: He loveth me—He loveth me. More surely than parent or child, or husband or wife, or the best tried friend, Jesus loves his blood-bought ones! O my soul, he loves thee! Be thou always ravished with his love.

Yet must I not quite close the list till I remind you that you are now this very day in union with him. You are laid on him and cemented to him as a stone is built upon the foundation. You are also joined to him vitally as the branch is to the stem, and as the member to the body. You are, moreover, joined to him by living, loving, lasting union, as the bride is united to the bridegroom. You are identical with your covenant Head to-day in the purposes of God. God hath dealt with him as though he had sinned your sin, and now he deals with you as though you had brought his righteousness. In the purposes of God you are wrapped up with the Lord Jesus Christ. Herein is love! The future of Jesus is to be your future; you are to be with him where he is. When Luther was in his worst troubles a friend came in to see him, and he noticed that he had written upon the wall in big letters the word, "Vivit!" He enquired of Luther what he meant by "vivit"? Luther answered, "Jesus lives; and if he did not live I would not care to live an hour." Yes, our life is bound up with that of Jesus. We are not called upon to live of ourselves, that would be death; but we have life and all things in union with him. This is love indeed, which rests not till it is one with its object. O you unconverted ones, how can you live apart from Christ? To live one hour apart from Christ is to live in infinite peril, since in that hour you may die, and pass beyond the realms of hope.

O beloved, you that love him are one with him by an infinite and indestructible union! "Who shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" This eternal oneness is the security both of grace and glory to us. Certain of our dear brethren and sisters have lately gone up the shining road. We might envy them if we did not know that even here we have the Lord's love to cheer us. Let us love Jesus for his love to our brethren; for now they share his throne, lie in his bosom, and are indulged with a vision of his glory. We also are on our way to the wedding-feast; let us keep our lamps burning. Comfort yourselves with the divine hope of everlasting joy. His love which came to us from heaven to earth will bear us up from earth to heaven. Heart cannot conceive what love has laid up for those whom it has chosen.

II. But I cannot proceed further after this fashion; I must now exhibit my theme in another light. LET US MEDITATE CONTINUALLY UPON THE LOVE OF CHRIST. I would help your meditations by giving a few hints. Do not think that I am preaching, but consider

that you are alone in your chamber, and that I am speaking through a telephone to you. Let me vanish, and let Jesus stand before you.

Meditate upon the love of Christ to you. *It is a love ancient and venerable, tried and proved.* He loved you when you were not; he loved you when you were, but were not what you should be. He has loved you into spiritual being; he has loved you so as to keep you in that being. He loved you so as to suffer and to die, and he loves you so as to permit you to suffer for his sake. He has loved you so well as to bear with your ill manners, your shortcomings, and your transgressions, your coldness, your backsliding, your lack of prayer, your hardness of heart your little love to your brethren, and all the other sins of which I will not now accuse you, for it is a time of love. He has loved you right on without pausing or slackening. Some of you have known his love these twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years; yes, some of you even more than that. It is no new thing with us to sing, "Jesus loves me." All this while he has never failed us once, nor done us an ill turn. The kindest husband that ever lived may sometimes be faulty, but this husband of our souls overfloweth with divine affection every day, and all the day. We could not find fault or flaw in his love, if we were to try. Doubtless, in the future we shall have to make continued trial of his love, but we are sure it will endure every test. We may have rough ways to traverse, but he will tread them with us, and we shall lean upon our Beloved. We may be very sick and faint, but he hath borne our sicknesses, and will sympathize with us. He hath said, and we believe it, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." His promise is "Certainly I will be with thee. Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you." The longer we live the more abundant evidence shall we receive of that love of Christ, which at this moment is assuredly ours. At this moment we believe in this love as implicitly as yonder babe believes in its mother's love, and stretches out its little hands to be embraced in those dear arms. Is it not so, dear friends? Do you not lean on the bosom of your Lord, without a shadow of mistrust, and do you not there find your fears all laid asleep? What love is this!

Remember also in your meditation, that *his love to you has been most free.* It was unbought, and even unsought. In Hosea it is written, "I will love them freely". and surely, if ever there was a case in which that verse was transparently true, it is in my case. Was it not so in yours? What was there in you that could have won his love? If he could see any beauty in me, it must have been first in his own eyes. They say that love is blind; and certainly, though our heavenly bridegroom is not blind, yet he was somewhat kinder still; for he saw our deformities of sin and folly, and yet he loved us notwithstanding, all. He saw our iniquities, and then he cast them into the depths of the sea. Jesus, lover of my soul, thou lovest me, and that love is free indeed! How couldst thou be enamoured of such an one as I am? It could only be because thou lovest those who most need thy love, and can least repay it. Inasmuch as it is even so, what shall I do but admire and adore? Brethren, let us muse and meditate, and pray, and praise, and wonder, and worship him whom, having not seen,

we love. Let us love him because he first loved us. Beholding the generous upbringing of a love which we could not deserve and would not seek, let us freely love in return.

This love of our Lord's, so free, so full, so forceful, was and is *most amazing*. We shall never bear better or more surprising news than this, that Jesus loves us. Nothing more surprising ever came to me than to learn "he loved me, and gave himself for me." Others may, perhaps, see what is wrought by the Lord's grace in us, and this may make them the less astonished at the Lord's love towards us; but we know ourselves, and see our blemishes as well as our beauties, and hence we know that there is nothing lovable in us by nature. When we see our Lord's beauty we see nothing but deformity in ourselves. The more we perceive his love the more do we abhor ourselves because of our own want of love to him, and because of the defilements into which we have fallen. We are amazed at our sin, and more amazed at his love. We shall go on reading in the golden Book of Christ's love throughout all eternity, and the longer we study it the more we shall be astonished that ever the Holy and the Glorious and the Ever-blessed should have espoused in love such insignificant, polluted, and fickle-hearted creatures as we are.

The love of Jesus is love *most practical*. Christ loves not in word only, but in deed and in truth. There is a greater force to my mind in Christ's deeds of love than in all the words which even he could have uttered. His deeds emphasize his words. Words cannot to the full express the mind of love: language filters from the lips, while feeling gushes from the heart. Jesus has written out his love in living characters. O Master! never man spake like thee, and yet that was thy most eloquent discourse when thou didst say but little, but didst stretch thy hands to the cross, that they might be nailed there. Then didst thou pour out thy heart, not in oratory, but in blood and water. Jesus has given to us his crown, his garments, his body, his soul, his life, himself. Said I not well that his is practical love? It is love full of tenderness, rich in bounty, lavish in thoughtfulness, firm in constancy, strong as death, mightier than the grave.

Think, again, that *it was personal love*. The Lord Jesus Christ loves each one of his people as much as if he had not one more. All the heart of Christ goes out to each one of us. The great sun shines today on this round earth, and while it pours its limitless flood of light on all, that one tiny daisy, as it bathes in the brightness, is able to say, "The sun is all mine." Though there be myriads of flowers in the meadows and the gardens, yet this one flower may freely possess all that the sun can give, or rather all that the little flower can receive, as much as if it were the only flower that blooms. So Jesus is to me, to you, to each one of us, all our own; neither lose we anything by the fact that he is all the own of so many millions. Nay, we gain by his being thus possessed by so many brethren, for we find our bliss repeated in the happiness of all whom Jesus loves as he loves us. In the text we read, "so have I loved you." Mark how the two personal pronouns "I" and "you" stand with nothing but "love"

between. The Lord Jesus, his own self, delighted in us, even in us who are not worthy to be named in the same day with him. Glory be to his holy name for ever!

The pith of our text lies in this, that to make us know a little of how much he loves us, our Lord has paralleled his love to us with the Father's love to him. What kind of love was that? Here we get into deep waters. Each thought is an abyss. We know that the Father loved the Son *without beginning*, even from eternity. It is not conceivable that there ever was a period when the Father did not love his Son: neither is it conceivable by those who read this Book of the Lord aright that there ever could have been a time when Jesus did not love his people. This love constrained him in the council chamber of eternity to become the surety of the covenant for those his Father gave him. In that time before time began, the Lord's love went forth; for his goings forth were of old, from everlasting. Not when we began to love him, nor even when we began to be, did the love of our redeeming Lord commence its divine history; but from of old, or ever the earth was. Some of you dote upon antiquities; but this to me is the most precious of all ancient things—the everlasting love of Jesus.

We also feel sure that the Father loves the Son *without end*. There cannot come an hour when the Father will banish the Son from his heart. Till then Jesus will never cast off his people. The unchanging Christ of God will never cease to love his redeemed; for the Father will never cease to love him. Hath he not said, "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands. The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee"?

Beloved, we must not fail to note *the intimacy of this love*, for Jesus said, "I and my Father are one." Even such is his love to us; it is intimate in character; for Jesus saith, "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." Jesus has made himself one with his people. He loves them with a marvellous intimacy, so that in loving them he loves himself, for he has made them to be "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." I go further: our Lord loved us better than he loved himself, for they truly said of him, "He saved others; himself he could not save." His mighty love made him to be a sacrifice for his people, that he might redeem them from under the curse of the law.

It is a love, in fact, *immeasurable*; there is no bound to it. The Father must love the Son inconceivably. As God himself is incomprehensible, so is the love of the Divine Persons to each other. Jesus also loves his chosen without limit. He loves unto the end with a love which has no end. We can only become conscious of a limited portion of that love, but it is not limited in itself. To this ocean there is neither shore nor bottom. Jesus loves omnipotently, everlastingly, and infinitely.

His love is also *immutable*, like that of his Father to him. Change is unknown to the heart of Jesus. He cannot love us more, and he will not love us less. I spoke of the ocean just

now, but it was a faulty emblem, for it ebbs and flows, while our Lord's love is ever at the full.

Now the point I want to bring you to is this—remember that the Father's intimate and infinite and unchanging love to his Son did not prevent his Son from being "a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"; did not prevent his having to say, "I have not where to lay my head"; did not prevent his bloody sweat in Gethsemane. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." Even he had to cry, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me," and to add, "nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Think you that you will be excused the bitter cup? You in your prayers have said, "My Father, if thou lovest me let me not be poor, let me not be bereaved, let me not be laid aside, let me not be evil spoken of." You know not what you ask. You pray against promotion when you pray against affliction. It was needful for the greater glory of the Mediator, in his complex person as God and Man, that he should greatly suffer and give himself a ransom for many, and therefore the love of the Father did not withhold the wormwood and the gall. And now for other purposes known to the wise heart of Jesus it is needful that you, his disciple, should be made to drink of his cup, and to be baptized with his baptism, and he will not deny you the privilege. You must be made a partaker of Christ's sufferings, that you may the better have fellowship with him in the highest form of his glory. Wherefore, believe that Christ loves thee when he afflicts thee, that he loves thee when he declines to remove the cup of trembling from thy lips. Thou wouldst decline the high honors he intends thee, but his love forbids the heavy loss. If we are to reign with him we must first suffer with him, and so his love urges us on to the suffering out of a high regard for our eternal welfare. O thou that art shrinking from the cross, art thou willing to forego the crown? Surely thou art not so foolish. Wherefore, be sure that these griefs are needful for thee, that thy soul may be enlarged and enabled to contain more of delight and of bliss in Christ Jesus thy Lord throughout eternity. To spare thee that pin's prick to-day would be to make thee a loser throughout the endless ages; wherefore, lift up thy finger to the needle and be ready to endure the sharp point for an instant, seeing it is the trifling penalty of thy rank as a follower of the Crucified. "These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory"; why, then, do we draw back from them?

God grant us grace to meditate much upon this love of Jesus Christ to us paralleled only by the Father's love to him; and meditating, may we become content to have fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, that we may partake in his glory!

III. Bear with me while I come, in the third place, to say, LET US EXPERIENCE AND ADMIRE THE POWER WHICH THIS LOVE HAS OVER us. I asked you to forget me just now, and to regard me as a mere telephone; but now I desire to retire altogether, that Jesus only may rule in your mind and heart in the fullness of his power. What can be more

powerful than this love? What can be operative in so many ways and in such varied methods? Happy is the man who is evermore under the spell of its power!

The love of Christ received into the heart *acts as a catholicon*. The old doctors searched for many a day to find a universal remedy. They sought in vain; yet here we have it. Christ is all medicine for all ailments; but he is vastly more than that. He heals and he fills; he fills and he beautifies; he beautifies and he confirms; he confirms and he perfects. So wondrously does his love work on men. Let the love of Christ be believed in and felt in your hearts, and *it will humble you*. Proud self goes out when sweet love comes in: the flesh dies through the power of that love on which the spirit lives. Can I be proud when my Beloved unveils to me his love which passeth knowledge? Impossible! Nay, I feel ready to sink into the ground when I see his glories: "My soul melted while my Beloved spake." Brethren the love of Christ is such a torrent that when it floods the soul it carries self before it.

*Love has also a melting influence*. The hammer of the law breaks, but the heart, when thus broken, is like a broken flint, every bit of which is still flint. When the love of Jesus performs its office, it dissolves us, turning the flint into flesh. An old divine says that when the law creates repentance the tears are hard as hailstones in the sinner's eyes, and I believe it is so; but when the gospel makes us repent, our weeping is as the dew of the morning. What a blessed softness grace produces! How tender is the heart which Jesus touches with his pierced hand!

This love of Christ, how *consoling* it is to mourning hearts! This is the best candle for one who is lying in bed in the dark. Oh, ye Much-afraids and Despondencies, who are hardly able to enjoy my subject this morning, I would fain uplift and cheer you by this sweet love; for indeed it is a balm for you. Do not turn away from this heavenly cordial. Do not try to doubt: you can scarcely do so when you think of our Redeemer's love? What! Desponding? when thy Beloved gives thee the kisses of his lips, and says, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love"? If his presence doth not cheer thee, surely heaven itself would not make thee glad; for what is heaven but the full enjoyment of his love?

The love of Jesus has a *cleansing and sanctifying power*. To kill the love of sin live in the love of Christ. He whom Christ loves hates sin. We begin to say within ourselves—What shall I quit for Christ? What shall I do for Christ? The love of Jesus shed abroad in the soul hath a sanctifying savor: it perfumes the heart with holiness. His love is as a fire of odoriferous woods; it consumes sin, and gives forth a fragrance of virtue. No furnace ever purifies our heart like the love of Jesus, which burns like coals of juniper. The way of love is the road to perfectness. Jonathan will not offend the David whom he loves. A heart enamoured of the holy Jesus will be very jealous lest it grieve him by sin.

A sweet sense of Christ's love also *strengthens us*. Love is strong as death, and it makes us strong for the duties of life. Those holy women in Scotland tied to stakes to be drowned by the incoming tide, what made them so brave in their confession of loyalty to Jesus? What

but a sense of his love to them? Feeble men and women were cast to the lions in the Roman amphitheatre; did you ever hear that they cowered before the-wild beasts, or asked mercy of the cruel crowd that sat around, and gazed on their agonies? Ah, no! Christ's soldiers never quail; and if you ask the secret of their courage, it is that he loves them, and they cannot but be bold for his dear sake.

This it is, too, that *makes us tender to others* and compassionate for this poor, ruined world. If any of you want to love the souls of men, learn how Christ loved *you*. You will love the vilest for his sake. If you would have eyes wherewith to weep over this sinful city, see how Jesus wept for *you*. If you would be prompt at all times to help the needy and succor the afflicted, keep close to the side of your gentle, tender, compassionate Lord, and as you feel his love to you, you will feel pity for others.

It is this that *inflames men with a true zeal for God* and for the good of men. Some hardly know what it is to be zealous; but there are a few saints yet remaining who are like pillars of flame from morning till night. We have some among us; my fear is lest they consume themselves and are gone before others have caught the flame. Would you know the secret of that holy flame which sits upon some apostolic men? The love of Jesus is that heavenly fire: they burn with love as they think of him whose love made him a whole-burnt offering for them.

This love *fills believers with delight*. If you would be always happy, sustain your mirth upon the spiced wine of his pomegranate. He loveth me; he loveth me, O joyous thought! Such an assurance creates a Paradise in a prison, and a heaven in heaviness.

Now I invite you, in conclusion, dear friends, to enter into this love of Christ by personal enjoyment. Wade into this river of the water of life. Do I hear you cry, "It is up to the ankles"? Go deeper, brother! "It is up to the knees." Go deeper, brother! Think more of divine love; value it more; live upon it more; trust it more! "Sir, it is up to my loins." Go deeper, brother! Thank God when it begins to lift you from your feet and bear you up above all earthly things. When you cannot touch the bottom rejoice. When you must needs swim, be happy to cast yourself upon the blessed flood. Drown you it cannot: these are not waters to sink in, but "waters to swim in." Be you as a bird in the air, a fish in the stream, an angel in heaven; let the love of Christ be your element: to you let love and live be the same word. You cannot think too much of Christ's love. The wise man saith, "Eat not too much honey"; but you cannot enjoy too much of the love of Christ. Get absorbed into it; be swallowed up in it till it is "no more I but Christ that liveth in me."

And when thou art once immersed in this love, continue in it. Christ does not love you to-day and cast you away to-morrow. Shall your faith be inconstant when his faithfulness is so abiding? How is it that you to-day are so happy in the Lord, and to-morrow will be so dreary? Are you up on Sunday and down on Monday? Is your God only the God of the Sabbath, and not of the whole week? What! is Christ a Sunday Christ, and not a Monday

Christ? and is his love a Sabbath theme, and not an inspiration for Tuesdays and Wednesdays? Beloved, this must not be. Why, it is a childish thing. I retract the word as dishonoring to dear children. It is a foolish thing to be warm with this love to-day, and then to be cold to-morrow. Surely near such a fire we ought to be always warm. Abide in his love. Jesus Christ would have his people remain in a high, happy, holy, heavenly condition. Do you say you think it is impossible? I do not agree with you. Enoch walked with God for many a year, till at last he walked away with God. Try after continued communion. Too often we get up to the top of the hill, and slide down again like boys at play. Come, come: this will never do. Let us keep up to the height which we reach. If I climb to the top of a hill I am by no means able to boast, for at once I see another hill beyond, which I had not before perceived. I aspire to climb that new summit, and I doubt not that if I attain it, I shall there spy another; and so on till the end. It is never ours to write the word "finality." *Higher and holier* is still our watch word. But why must we come down into the marshes again? What can be the good of rushing out of the sunshine of Christ's love into the fogs of distrust? Whereunto we have attained, let us abide in it, and seek grace to go on to something more. Does not our Lord intend this when he says, "Continue ye in my love"? "Oh," saith one, "you set us a hard task." No, brother, I have set before you a pleasant privilege, but I admit that you will not reach it by your own power, and as you are in yourself. But I am not talking to you as you are in yourself. I am talking to you as you are in Christ; and as you are in Christ all power is given unto you. Exercise that power. Henceforth instead of singing a song which breaks up into verses with groans between, let us chant a Psalm that goes right straight on, and has in every verse the joyous stanza, "His mercy endureth for ever." My Beloved is mine and I am his, and till the day break and the shadows flee away my soul shall feast upon his love, and joy and rejoice in him. God help you to do this for his name's sake! Oh, unconverted hearers, do you not wish to taste our joys? Come as you are, and trust in Jesus, and they shall be yours. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON. [John 15](#).

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK" 916, 798, 792.