

## **The Heart—a Gift for God**

A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY DECEMBER 11, 1887,  
DELIVERED

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"My son, give Me your heart." [Proverbs 23:26](#).

THESE are the words of Solomon speaking in the name of Wisdom, which wisdom is but another name for the Lord Jesus Christ, who is made of God unto us Wisdom. If you ask, "What is the highest wisdom upon the earth?" it is to believe in Jesus Christ whom God has sent—to become His follower and disciple—to trust Him and imitate Him. It is God, in the Person of His dear Son, who says to each one of us, "My son, give Me your heart." Can we answer, "Lord, I have given You my heart"? Then we are His sons! Let us cry, "Abba, Father," and bless the Lord for the high privilege of being His children. "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

I. Let us look at this precept, "My son, give Me your heart," and notice, first, that LOVE PROMPTS THIS REQUEST OF WISDOM.

Only love seeks after love. If I desire the love of another, it can surely only be because I, myself, have love toward him. We care not to be loved by those whom we do not love. It were an embarrassment rather than an advantage to receive love from those to whom we would not return it. When God asks human love, it is because God is Love. As the sparks mount toward the sun, the central fire, so ought our love rise toward God, the central source of all pure and holy love. It is an instance of infinite condescension that God should say, "My son, give Me your heart." Notice the strange position in which it puts God and man. The usual position is for the creature to say to God, "Give me"—but here the Creator cries to feeble man, "Give Me." The Great Benefactor, Himself, becomes the Petitioner—stands at the door of His own creatures and asks, not for offerings, nor for words of praise, but for their hearts! Oh, it must be because of the great love of God that He condescends to put Himself into such a position. And if we were right-minded, our immediate response would be, "Do You seek my heart? Here it is, my Lord." But alas, few thus respond, and none do so except those who are, like David, men after God's own heart. When God says to such, "Seek you My face," they answer at once, "Your face, Lord, will we seek"—but this answer is prompted by Divine Grace. It can only be love that seeks love.

Again, it can only be supreme Love which leads Wisdom to seek after the heart of such poor things as we are. The best saints are poor things and as for some of us who are not the best, what poor, poor things we are! How foolish! How slow to learn! Does Wisdom seek us for scholars? Then Wisdom must be of a most condescending kind. We are so guilty, too. We shall rather disgrace than honor the courts of Wisdom if she admits us to her school.

Yet she says to each of us, "Give Me your heart. Come and learn of Me." Only Love can invite such scholars as we are! I am afraid we shall never do much to glorify God—we have but small parts to begin with, and our position is obscure. Yet, common-place people though we are, God says to each one of us, "My son, give Me your heart." Only infinite Love would come a-wooing to such wretched hearts as ours!

For what has God to gain? Brothers and Sisters, if we did all give our hearts to Him, in what respect would He be the greater? If we gave Him all we have, would He be the richer? "The silver and the gold are Mine," He says, "and the cattle on a thousand hills. If I were hungry, I would not tell you." He is too great for us to make Him greater, too good for us to make Him better, too glorious for us to make Him more illustrious. When He comes a-wooing and cries, "Give Me your heart," it must be for our benefit and not for His own! Surely it is more blessed for us to give than for Him to receive! He can gain nothing—we gain everything by the gift. Yet He does gain a child and that is a sweet thought. Every-

one that gives God His heart becomes God's child—and a father esteems his children to be treasures—and I reckon that God sets a higher value upon His children than upon all the works of His hand besides!

We see the Great Father's likeness in the story of the returning prodigal. The father thought more of his returning son than of all that he possessed besides. "It was meet," said he "that we should make merry and be glad: for this, your brother, was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found." Oh, I tell you, you that do not know the Lord, that if you give your hearts to Him you will make Him glad! The Eternal Father will be glad to get back His lost son, to press to His bosom a heart warm with affection for Him, which heart before had been cold and stony towards Him. "My son, give Me your heart," He says, as if He longed for our love and could not bear to have children that had forgotten Him! Do you not hear Him speak? Speak, Spirit of God, and make each one hear You say, "My son, give Me your heart"!

You who are sons of God already may take my text as a call to give God your heart anew, for—I do not know how it is—men are wonderfully scarce now and men with hearts are rare! If preachers had larger hearts, they would move more people to hear them. A sermon preached without love falls flat and dead. We have heard sermons, admirable in composition and excellent in doctrine, but like that palace which the Empress of Russia built upon the Neva of blocks of ice! Nothing more lustrous, nothing more sharply cut, nothing more charming, but oh, so cold, so very cold! Its very beauty a frost to the soul! "My son," says God to every preacher, "give Me your heart." O Minister, if you cannot speak with eloquent tongue, at least let your heart run over like burning lava from your lips! Let your heart be like a geyser, scalding all that come near you, permitting none to remain indifferent!

You that teach in the school, you that work for God in any way, do it thoroughly well! "Give Me your heart, My son," says God. It is one of the first and last qualifications of a good

workman for God that he should put his heart into his work. I have heard mistresses tell servants, when polishing tables, that elbow grease was a fine thing for such work. And so it is. Hard work is a splendid thing! It will make a way under a river, or through the Alps. Hard work will do almost everything—but in God's service it must not only be hard work, but hot work! The heart must be on fire! The heart must be set upon its design. See how a child cries! Though I am not fond of hearing it, yet I note that some children cry all over! When they want a thing, they cry from the tips of their toes to the last hair of their heads! That is the way to preach! And that is the way to pray! And that is the way to live—the whole man must be heartily engaged in holy work.

Love prompts the request of Wisdom. God knows that in His service we shall be miserable unless our hearts are fully engaged. Whenever we feel that preaching is heavy work, or Sunday school teaching, after six days' labor, is tiresome, or going round a district with tracts is a terrible task—then we shall do nothing well! Put your heart into your service and all will be joyful—but no way else.

II. Now, I turn my text another way. WISDOM PERSUADES US TO OBEY THIS LOVING REQUEST. To take

our hearts and give them up to God is the wisest thing that we can do. If we have done it before, we had better do it over again and hand over, once more, the sacred deposit into those dear hands which will surely keep that which we commit to their guardian care. "My son, give Me your heart."

Wisdom prompts us to do it, for, first, many others crave our hearts, and our hearts will surely go one way or the other. Let us see to it that they do not go where they will be ruined. I will not read you the next verse, but many a man has lost his heart and soul eternally by the lusts of the flesh. He has perished through "her that lies in wait as for a prey, and increases the transgressors among men." Happy is that young man whose heart is never defiled with vice! There is no way of being kept from impurity except by giving up the heart to the holy Lord. In a city like this, the most pure-minded are surrounded with innumerable temptations—and many there are that slip with their feet before they are aware of it, being carried away because they have not time to think before the temptation has cast them to the ground. "Therefore, My son," says Wisdom, "give Me your heart. Everybody will try to steal your heart, therefore leave it in My charge. Then you need not fear the fascinations of the strange woman, for I have your heart and I will keep it safe unto the day of My appearing." It is most wise to give Jesus our heart, for seducers will seek after it.

There is another destroyer of souls. I will not say much about it, but I will just read you what the context says of it— "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has babbling? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine. They that go to seek mixed wine. Look not you upon the wine when it is red, when it gives his color in the cup, when it moves itself aright. At the last it bites like a

serpent, and stings like an adder. Your eyes shall behold strange women and your heart shall utter perverse things." Read carefully the rest of the

chapter and then hear the voice of Wisdom say, "My son, if you would be kept from drunkenness and gluttony, from wantonness and chambering, and everything that the heart inclines to, give Me your heart."

It is well to guard your heart with all the apparatus that wisdom can provide. It is totally well to abstain from that which becomes a snare to you, but, I charge you, do not rely upon abstinence, but give your heart to Jesus—for nothing short of true godliness will preserve you from sin so that you shall be presented faultless before His Presence with exceedingly great joy! As you would wish to preserve an unblemished character and be found honorable to the end, my son, I charge you, give your heart to Christ!

Wisdom urges to immediate decision because it is well to have a heart at once occupied and taken up by Christ. It is an empty heart that the devil enters. You know how the boys always break the windows of empty houses, well, the devil throws stones wherever the heart is empty! If you can say to the devil when you are tempted, "You are too late; I have given my heart to Christ, I cannot listen to your overtures, I am affianced to the Savior by bonds of love that never can be broken," what a blessed safeguard you have! I know of nothing that can so protect the young man in these perilous days as to be able to sing, "O God, my heart is fixed! My heart is fixed! Others may flit to and fro and seek something to light upon, but my heart is fixed upon You forever. I am unable to turn aside through Your sweet Grace." "My son," says the text, "give Me your heart," that Christ may dwell there, that when Satan comes, the One who is stronger than the strong man armed may keep His house and drive the enemy back!

Give Jesus your hearts, beloved Friends, for Wisdom bids you do it at once, because it will please God. Have you a friend to whom you wish to make a present? I know what you do—you try to find out what that friend would value, for you say, "I should like to give him what would please him." Do you want to give God something that is sure to please Him? You need not build a Church of matchless architecture—I do not know that God cares much about stones and wood. You need not wait till you will have amassed money to endow a row of almshouses. It is well to bless the poor, but Jesus said that one who gave two mites, which made a farthing, gave more than all the rich men who cast in of their wealth into the treasury. What would God my Father like me to give? He answers, "My son, give Me your heart." He will be pleased with that, for He, Himself, seeks the gift!

If there are any here to whom this day is an anniversary of birth, or of marriage, or of some other joyful occasion, let them make a present to God and give Him their hearts! It is wonderful that He should word it so. "My son, give Me your heart." I should not have dared to say such a thing if He had not said it, but He does put it so. This will please Him better than a bull that has horns and hoofs, better than smoking incense in the silver censer, better

than all you can contrive of art, or purchase by wealth, or design for beauty. "My son, give Me your heart."

For notice, again, that if you do not give Him your heart, you cannot please Him at all. You may give God what you please, but without your heart it is all an abomination to Him! To pray without your heart is solemn mockery. To sing without your heart is an empty sound. To give, to teach, to work without your heart is all an insult to the Most High! You cannot do God any service till you give Him your heart! You must begin with this. Then shall your hand and purse give what they will and your tongue and brain shall give what they can, but first your heart—first your heart—your inmost self—your love—your affection. You must give Him your heart, or you give Him nothing!

And does He not deserve it? I am not going to use that argument because, somehow, if you press a man to give a thing, at last it comes not to be a gift, but a tax. Our consecration to God must be unquestionable in its freeness. Religion is voluntary or else false. If I shall prove that your heart is God's due, why, then, you will not give, but rather pay as though it were a debt! So I will touch that string very gently, lest, in seeking to bring forth music, I snap the chord. I will put it thus—surely it were well to give a heart for a heart. There was One who came and took human nature on Him and wore a human heart within His bosom—and that human heart was pressed full sore with sorrow till, it is written, that He wept. It was pressed still more with anguish till, it is written, "He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood, falling to the ground." He was still further overwhelmed with grief, till at last He said, "Reproach has broken My heart, and I am full of heaviness." And then it is written, "One of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side and forthwith came there out blood and water." A heart was given for you—will you not give your heart? I say no more.

I was about to say that I wished I could bring my Master here to stand on this platform, that you might see Him, but I know that faith comes by hearing, not by seeing! Yet would I set Him forth evidently crucified among you and for you.

Oh, give Him, then, a heart for a heart, and yield yourself up to Him! Is there not a sweet whisper in your spirit that now says, "Yield your heart"? Listen to that still small voice and there shall be no need that I speak further.

Believe me, beloved Friends, there is no getting wisdom except you give your heart to it. There is no understanding the science of Christ Crucified, which is the most excellent of all the sciences, without giving your heart to it. Some of you have been trying to be religious. You have been trying to be saved, but you have done it in an off-handed sort of style. "My son, give Me your heart." Wisdom suggests to you that you should do it, for unless your whole heart is thrown into it, you will never prosper in it. Certain men never get on in business. They do not like their trade and so they never prosper. And, certainly, in the matter of religion, no man can ever prosper if he does not love it—if his whole heart is not in it. Some people have just enough religion to make them miserable. If they had none, they

would be able to enjoy the world, but they have too much religion to be able to enjoy the world, and yet not enough to enjoy the world to come! Oh, you poor betweenites—you that hang like Mohammed 's coffin between earth and Heaven! You that are like bats, neither birds nor beasts—you that are like a flying fish that tries to live in the air and water, too, and finds enemies in both elements! You that are neither this, nor that, nor the other—strangers in God's country and yet not able to make yourselves at home with the devil—I pity you!

Oh, that I could give you a tug to get you to this side of the border land! My Master bids me compel you to come in, but what can I do except repeat the message of the text? "My son, give Me your heart." Do not be shilly-shallying any longer. Let your heart go one way or the other! If the devil is worth loving, give him your heart and serve him! But if Christ is worth loving, give Him your heart and have done with hesitation! Turn to Jesus once and for all! Oh, may His Spirit turn you and you shall be turned—and His name shall have the praise!

III. And now I close with the third observation. LET US BE WISE ENOUGH AT ONCE TO ATTEND TO THIS

ADMONITION OF WISDOM. Let us now give God our heart. "My son, give Me your heart."

When? At once! There is no intimation that God would have us wait a little. I wish that those persons who only mean to wait a little would fix a time when they will leave off waiting. They are always going to be right tomorrow. Which day of the month is that? I have searched the calendar and cannot find it. I have heard that there is such a thing as the fool's calendar and that tomorrow is there—but then, you are not fools and do not keep such a calendar! Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow—it is a raven's croak of evil omen! Today, today, today, today, today—that is the silver trumpet of salvation—and he that hears it shall live! God grant that we may not forever be crying out, "tomorrow," but at once give our hearts to Him!

How? If we attend to this precept, we shall notice that it calls upon us to act freely. "My son, give Me your heart." You do not need to have it led in fetters. It might, as I have already said, prevent a thing from being a gift if you too pressingly proved that it was due. It is due, but God puts it, as it were, upon free will, for once, and leaves it to free agency. He says, "My son, give Me your heart. All that you have from Me comes as a gift of Free Grace—now freely give Me back your heart." Remember, wherever we speak about the power of Grace, we do not mean a physical force, but only such force as may be applied to free agents and to responsible beings. The Lord begs you not to want to be crushed and pounded into repentance, nor whipped and spurred to holy living. But, "My son, give Me your heart." I have heard that the richest juice of the grape is that which comes with the slightest pressure at the first touch. Oh, to give God our freest love! You know the old proverb that one volunteer

is worth two pressed men? We shall all be pressed men in a certain sense, but yet it is written, "Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power." May you be willing at once!

"My son, give Me your heart." It seems a pity that a man should have to live a long life of sin to learn that sin does not pay. It is a sad case when he comes to God with all his bones broken and enlists in the Divine army after he has spent all his youth in the service of the devil and has worn himself out. Christ will have him whenever he comes, but how much better it is, while yet you are in the days of your youth, to say, "Here, Lord, I give You my heart. Constrained by Your sweet love, I yield to You in the dawn of my being!"

That is what the text means—give God your heart at once, and do it freely.

Do it thoroughly. "My son, give Me your heart." You cannot give Christ a piece of a heart, for a heart that is halved is killed. A heart that has even a little bit taken off is a dead heart. The devil does not mind having half your heart. He is quite satisfied with that because he is like the woman to whom the child did not belong—he does not mind if it is cut in halves. The true mother of the child said, "Oh, spare the child! Do not divide it!" And so Christ, who is the true Lover of

hearts, will not have the heart divided. If it must go one way and the wrong way, let it go that way! But if it will go the right way, He is ready to accept it, cleanse it and perfect it—only it must go all together and not be divided. "Give Me your heart."

Did I hear somebody say, "I am willing to give God my heart"? Very well, then, let us look at it practically. Where is it now? You cannot give your heart up till you find out where it is. I knew a man who lost his heart. His wife had not got it and his children had not got it—and he did not seem as if he had got it himself. "That is odd," you say. Well, he used to starve himself. He scarcely had enough to eat. His clothes were threadbare. He starved all who were round him. He did not seem to have a heart. A poor woman owed him a little rent. Out she went into the street! He had no heart. A person had fallen back a little in the payment of money that he had lent him. The debtor's little children were crying for bread. The man did not care who cried from hunger, or what became of the children. He would have his money. He had lost his heart. I never could make out where it was till I went to his house, one day, and I saw a huge chest. I think they called it an iron safe—it stood behind the door of an inner room—and when he unlocked it with a heavy key, and the bolts were shot, and the inside was opened, there was a musty, fussy thing within it, as dry and dead as the kernel of a walnut seven years old. It was his heart! If you have locked up your heart in an iron safe, get it out! Get it out as quickly as you can! It is a horrible thing to pack up a heart in five-pound notes, or bury it under heaps of silver and gold. Hearts are never healthy when covered up with hard metal. Your gold and silver are cankered if your heart is bound up with them.

I knew a young lady—I think I know several of that sort now—whose heart I could never see. I could not make out why she was so flighty, giddy, frothy, till I discovered that

she had kept her heart in a wardrobe. A poor prison for an immortal soul, is it not? You had better fetch it out before the moth eats it as wool. When our garments become the idols of our hearts, we are such foolish things that we can hardly be said to have hearts at all! Even such foolish hearts as these, it were well to get out of the wardrobe and give to Christ.

Where is your heart? I have known some leave it at the public house and some in places that I shall not mention, lest the cheek of modesty should crimson. But wherever your heart is, it is in the wrong place if it is not with Christ. Go, fetch it, Sir! Bring it here and give it into the hand of Him that bought it.

But in what state is it? "Yes, there's the rub." For, as I told you that the miser's heart was musty and fussy, so men's hearts begin to smell of the places wherein they keep them. Some women's hearts are moldy and ragged through their keeping them in the wardrobe. Some men's hearts are cankered through keeping them among their gold. And some are rotten through and through, through keeping them steeped in vice! Where is the drunk's heart? In what state must it be? Foul and filthy. Still God says, "Give Me your heart." What? Such a thing as that? Yes, did I not tell you that when He asked for your heart, it was all for love of you and not for what He should get out of you? And what is such a heart as yours, my Friend, that has been in such a place and fallen into such a state? Still, give it to Him, for I will tell you what He will do—He will work wonders for your heart.

You have heard of alchemists who took base metal, so they say, and transmuted it into gold? The Lord will do more than this. "Give Me your heart." Poor, filthy, defiled, polluted, depraved heart!—give it to Him! It is stony now, corrupted now. He will take it and in those sacred hands of Christ, that heart shall lie till, in its place you shall see a heart of flesh, pure, clean, heavenly! "Oh," you say, "I never could make out what to do with my hard heart." Give it, now, to Christ and He will change it! Yield it up to the sweet power of His infinite Grace and He will renew a right spirit within you! God help you to give Jesus your heart and to do it now!

There is going to be a collection for the hospitals. Stop, you collectors, till I have said my last word. What are you going to give? I do not mind what you are going to put into the boxes, but I want to pass round an invisible plate for my Lord. I desire to pass it round to all of you—and please, will you say to yourself when you drop your money into the box, "I am going to drop my heart into the invisible collection and give it up to Jesus. It is all that I can do"? Collectors, pass round the boxes, and you, O Spirit of God, go from man to man and take possession of all hearts for Jesus our Lord! Amen.