

Love's Climax

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DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,

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"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." [1 John 4:10](#).

To find love, you have need send a lover—one whose soul is full of love is the most likely to discover it. John, with love in his heart, soars aloft and, using his eagle eyes, looks over all history and all space and, at last, he poises himself over one spot, for he has found that for which he was looking, and says, "Herein is love." There is love in a thousand places, like the scattered drops of spray on the leaves of the forest, but as for the ocean, that is in one place, and when we reach it, we say, "Herein is water." There is love in many places, like wandering beams of light, but as for the sun, it is in one part of the heavens and as we look at it, we say, "Herein is light." So, "Herein," said the Apostle, as he looked toward the Lord Jehovah, Himself, "Herein is love." He did not point to his own heart and say, "Herein is love," for that was but a little pool filled from the great sea of love. He did not look at the Church of God and say of all the myriads who counted not their lives dear unto them, "Herein is love," for their love was only the reflected brightness of the great sun of love! No, he looked to God the Father, in the splendor of His condescension in giving His only Son to die for us, and he said "Herein is love," as if all love were here—love at its utmost height, love at its climax, love out-doing itself—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

I have no time for an elaborate discourse and I have no desire to preach in such a fashion, but I do want to get at your hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit. There seem to me to be four things in the text, each of which tends to bring out the greatness of Divine Love. First, here is love to the loveless—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us." Secondly, here is love to the sinful—"God loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Thirdly, here is love providing a propitiation, not passing by sin without atonement, but making a propitiation for sin. And, lastly, here is love surrendering the Only-Begotten—"God loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

I. First, then, dear Friends, that we may see the love of God in its fullness, I invite you to think of His LOVE TO THE LOVELESS—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us."

Now, if man had loved God, God need not have loved man. If all of us from our earliest childhood had loved our God, it would have somewhat lessened the wonder that He should love us. I can understand that we should marvel at God's loving us, even if we had always loved Him, for we are so insignificant that what little love we can give to Him can never deserve that He should fix His heart of love upon us. If an ant were in love with an angel, it would not, therefore, follow that the angel ought to be in love with the ant, yet there is no difference between an ant and an angel compared with the difference between us and God! We are nothing and He is All in All!

Yet I admit that if, from our youth up we had always loved God, it would not have seemed so extraordinary a thing, knowing what we do of God, that He should have loved us, but this is the startling word in our text—"Not that we loved God." There is a negative put there and the positive assertion is that God did love us, even though there is also the negative that we did not love Him. It is very easy for us to love those who love us. It is hard, sometimes, to love those who do not love us, especially if they are under great obligation to us—and I am sure that was our case with regard to God. We were deeply in debt to Him and we ought to have loved Him with all our heart, mind, soul and strength—but we did nothing of the kind! Yet, notwithstanding all that, He loved us. While we were His enemies, He loved us and sent His Son to save us.

Furthermore, let me remark that, when man does love God, it is no very great wonder. If you and I love God—and I hope that we do—if we love Him with all the fervor of which our hearts are capable, is there anything, after all, very extraordinary in such affection? Why, Brothers and Sisters, not to love the Lord our God is detestable! To love Him is, in one sense, commendable, but it can never be considered meritorious! Who can help loving a kind father who has cared for him all his days? Who can help loving one who has saved him from death? Who can help loving one who has laid down his life for him? Surely, if we are in a right state of heart, we cannot help loving God because He first loved us. When we do love Him, it is not at all wonderful—it would be little enough return for the great love wherewith He has loved us if we gave to Him all the love that we can ever bestow upon anyone—

"Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were a present far too small! Love so amazing, so Divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all!" And, if God's love gets all that it demands, it is even then but a poor return that we have made for love so magnificent as His!

But, Beloved, I have been only supposing something which is not true, for I have been supposing that we loved God. The fact is otherwise, according to the text, for the Apostle says, "Not that we loved God." Let us think a little of that terrible fact! I do not want to preach to you, but I do wish you to preach to yourselves, or rather, that the Holy Spirit may preach to you from this passage—"Not that we loved God." For many a year we were indifferent to God. He came across our path in many ways, but we did not want to see Him, or to hear

about Him. Some of us were favored by godly training, yet we did our best to miss the blessing of it. We tried, as men say, to "sow our wild oats." We did not care to do what God would have us do—we were totally indifferent to His claims! Yet now, with tears in our eyes, we can truthfully say that, "He loved us." We know that the Lord loved us even when we were indifferent to Him!

Worse than that, there were some who were even insulting to God. I mean that they spoke ill words about Him and about His Grace, His day, His people, His cause, His Word. Some spoke exceedingly proud and exalted themselves against the Lord—yet He loved them. Oh, how it wrings the heart of a penitent sinner to think that God loved him when he was a blasphemer, loved him when he imprecated a curse upon himself, loved him when God, Himself, could not see anything in him that was lovable! Loved him when there was not a spot of merit as big as a pin's head upon which love could have rested if it had needed to rest on merit at all! Oh, wonder of wonders! "Herein is love, not that we loved God," but that we were indifferent to Him and some even insulting to Him!

And oh, what rebellion against God there was in some of our hearts! How we kicked and struggled against the idea of yielding to Him! Are there not numbers of you who never think of God at all? You go to your daily work, or to your business and God is not at all in your thoughts! If there were no God, it would make no difference to some of you, except that you would feel a little more comfortable and you would then be glad that there would be no Judgment Day. But, O Sirs, this is a sad, a miserable state to be in! If there were no hereafter and I had to die like a dog, I would choose to love my God, for I find a peace, a strength, a joy in it that makes life worth living! There is nothing here on earth that is worth a man's pursuit except his God! If he once knew the love of God, life would wear sunbeams about it—but apart from that it is a drudgery! To the unbeliever, existence in this world is a horrible slavery.

But, Brothers and Sisters, it is very wonderful that God should love us when we try our hardest to be rid of Him, when we are at enmity against Him, when we are opposed, even, to His love, and will not listen to the Gospel of His Grace! Yet so He did—He loved us even in this condition! Perhaps some of you do not feel that there is anything very remarkable in this love of the Lord to the loveless. I should like you to try, if you could, love somebody who has nothing about him that is at all lovable. I hope, dear Christian people, that you do this, but if you learn to love the wicked, the ungodly, the injurious, the deceivers—if you even love those who vilify you, those who slander you every day, those who despise you and deride you and those who are ungrateful to you—if you do this, then you will get into some sort of sympathy with God and you will begin to understand a little of what His great love must be!

But there are some men who will never know what such an experience as that is until God's Grace renews them, for if anybody says half a word against them, their fist is soon in

his eye! If anyone does them the slightest injury, they will remember it and resent it as long as they live! Yes, and I am afraid that there are some who call themselves Christians who are of this spirit, and will not forgive. I heard of a man who was driving an omnibus and who was beating one of the horses, but he never hit the other. Someone on the box said to him, "Why don't you whip the other horse?" "Oh," he answered, "I never touch him, for if I did, when I put him up at night, he would kick me like a Christian." When I heard that, I supposed that there must be some so-called Christians who know how to kick when they get a cut of the whip— and I am afraid that there are. But, if you can forgive to 70 times seven and still continue to forgive, even then you have only done what you ought to do, for this is what the Lord Jesus commanded His disciples to do—and this is what God did, though He was under no obligation to do anything of the kind! Instead of bearing any resentment, He was full of Almighty Love. And there are some here, tonight, who, as they remember the years in which they lived without loving God, must feel that, "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us."

II. But now, secondly, it greatly enhances the love of God that it is LOVE TO THE SINFUL. Remember that all sins are offenses against God. Yet it is clear from our text that the Lord loves those who have offended Him. There are multitudes who have lived a life full of opposition to God, yet He has loved them all the while and saved them after all!

Remember, too, that God has a very keen appreciation of what sin is. It shocks Him, it disgusts Him—He cannot bear it. He calls it, "this abominable thing which I hate." You and I are often callous to sin, but God abhors it. His holy soul is stirred to indignation against it. Yet, notwithstanding that—

"God loved the world of sinners lost And ruined by the Fall"

and sent His Son into the world to deliver men from sin, the sin which He loathed and hated, for He determined to save them from the sin, itself, and from all its terrible results! Well might the hymn-writer I just quoted go on to sing—

"Oh, 'twas love, 'twas wondrous love, The love of God to me! It brought my Sa vior from abo ve, To die on Calvary."

Do not forget, also, that many sins are committed specially against God's Love. That is to say, there are some who even dare to sin the more because God is merciful! There are, no doubt, many who have become hardened in their lives of sin—though it is a shocking thing that it should be so—by the very fact that they believe God is ready to forgive them. If such is the condition of your hearts, my Hearers, let me assure you that it has also been the case with many others and yet, notwithstanding such an enormity of guilt, they have been saved from their sins. Verily, "herein is love."

In the case of some persons, these sins have been persisted in and aggravated. There are many whom God has loved with an everlasting love and whom Christ has redeemed with His precious blood, who have lived twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy years up to their

necks in sin—and that against light and knowledge! Some have gone on sinning with a high hand more and more, yet Almighty Love has come in and saved even them! Never let it be thought that any sinner is beyond the reach of Divine Mercy so long as he is in the land of the living. I stand here to preach illimitable love, unbounded Grace to the vilest of the vile, to those who have nothing in them that can deserve consideration from God— men who ought to be swept into the bottomless pit at once if Justice meted out to them their just deserts! Even such sinners as these, in multitudes of instances, have been washed and made clean through the blood of Jesus Christ! "Herein is love."

I do not see how God ever could have shown His love to the same extent as it is now displayed if there had never been any sin in the world. I would not dare to say, as Augustine boldly did concerning Adam's sin, "Beata culpa!"—"Happy fault!"—because it gave an opportunity for Divine Love to prove itself to an extraordinary degree! But I will say this— if God had made ten thousand worlds and lit them up with all His wisdom and power, I do not see how He could have manifested His matchless love, even then, as He displays it now in the fact that He has loved sinful men and women—and loved them so as to make them His sons and daughters and bring them to dwell with Him at His right hand through Jesus Christ His Son!—

"He ga ve His Son, His only Son, To ransom rebel worms! 'Tis here He makes His goodness known In its most Divine forms."

I have spoken to you, therefore, of two things that enhance God's love—love to the loveless, and love to the sinful. I wish that some poor soul could creep in through the door of God's Mercy to which I have pointed and get a part and lot in these precious matters!

III. But now, thirdly, one of the things that make God's love seem very wonderful is that it is LOVE PROVIDING A PROPITIATION.

I have heard it asked, "Why did not God just wipe out human sin, and say to the guilty, "There, there, you have done wrong, but I have forgiven you"? Now, if He had done that, what inference would you have drawn from such action on His part? Certainly you would not have been able to say, "Herein is love," in the sense in which you can now say it.

If the Lord had thus passed by sin, sin would have seemed little, and Divine Love little. Many would have said, "Oh, well, sin was nothing very great after all. It was an offense against God—He blotted it out—and there is an end of it!" Is not everybody here quite certain that we would have spoken like that? We would have concluded that sin was a very trivial matter, nothing to worry about, or God would not have passed it by so readily. But, look—it was such an awful evil that He could not pass it by. In His Wisdom, whose judgment is Infallible, sin was not pardonable except through a propitiatory Sacrifice! It was not possible that offenses against The Divine Majesty should be wiped out without expiation! God was the best judge of that question and now, when He says, "There must be a propitiation, but

I will provide it; there must be an Atonement, but I will arrange it"—"Herein is love"—love seen at a greater height than it could have been seen in any other way!

Besides, dear Friends, by any other method of removing sin, love would not have been seen so majestic over all other attributes. Suppose that the Lord had simply said, "Well, though these people have offended, I forgive them and there is an end of the quarrel"? Then there could not have been exhibited that wondrous sight which we now see! In the death of Christ, the Great Propitiation, we see Divine Wisdom planning the way, exercising itself to the fullest to devise a method by which God might be just and yet, "the Justifier of him which believes in Jesus." Then we see Divine Justice coming in fully satisfied by the death of Christ and bowing a glad assent to the pardon of the sinner—who is as justly forgiven as he would, on the other hand, have been righteously punished! In the vicarious Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ, we see all the attributes of God sitting at the feet of Love—all looking up and saying to Love—"We will do your bidding, we will, all of us, co-act and co-work till the whole Godhead shall be seen exerting its Omniscience and putting forth its Omnipotence, in order that there might be a propitiation for sin." "Herein is love."

Again, I do not see, dear Friends, if God had pardoned us without expiation, how we ever could have felt the security of love that we now feel. I feel at this moment—I do not know how every Believer, here, feels—but I feel that I am absolutely safe! I am a sinner, but there is no reason on earth, or under the earth, or in Heaven, itself, why I should be sent to Hell. My sin has been forgiven me, but, what is much more than that, my Lord Jesus Christ has made such a complete Atonement for all my guilt that it does not even exist as a charge against me! The debt is paid and the receipt is nailed to His cross—and this gives me such a perfect peace, such an absolute rest—I do not think I could have had if I had merely read in the Scriptures that God had passed by the sin without a propitiation! He has not passed by the sin—He has exacted the full penalty for it! And the penalty having been paid, the Atonement having been offered, who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Our dead sins are buried! Christ, Himself, has put them away, and they can never rise against us in judgment any more. Looking up to our Lord, we can say, with Toplady—

"Complete Atonement You have made, And to the utmost farthing paid Whatever Your people owed! Nor can His wrath on me take place, If sheltered in Your righteousness, And sprinkled with Your blood." And once more, the stoop of love could never have seemed so great without expiation, for, see, if God had pardoned sin without Atonement, He would have sat in the serene majesty of Heaven and we would have thought that sin was a trifling thing, altogether beneath His notice! But now, He that made all things and by whom all things consist, takes off the robes of His splendor and comes down to earth! What can He be going to do? Blessed spirits, who have waited around His Throne for ages, what is He doing? He is going to the earth to unite the nature of fallen humanity with His own perfect Deity! He that is God is also to be Man! What a wonder! What a marvel! But there is

something more extraordinary to follow—being found in fashion as a Man, the time comes when man's sin is laid upon Him! What? did He bear sin? Listen—"Who His own self"—that is, Christ, whom angels worship, the Incarnate Wisdom, without whom was not anything made that was made—"who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree."

Why, do you know, sometimes, when I am thinking over this wondrous stoop of love, I wish that I could jump into this pulpit, directly, and tell you what I feel about it? Sometimes, at the dead of night, I sit up in bed, lost in wonder at the amazing Love of God in the gift of His dear Son! That I should commit a sin and that God, Himself, should bear its punishment! That my guilt should make a propitiation, necessary—and that the Divine Son of God should suffer in my place! That the necessary expiation should be made—this is surely the greatest wonder of earth or Heaven! It is the greatest marvel that ever shall be, that He, who is God over all, blessed forever, yet stoops so low as this! I can understand His stooping to poverty and being a carpenter. I can understand His stooping to hunger and to thirst. I can understand His stooping even to death—but that He should bear our sins—this is the greatest stoop of all! "Herein is love." O blessed Lord Jesus, how must You have loved us when You did not disdain to bear even the enormous burden of our sin! Oh, that these lips had language that I could tell this old, old story as my heart often tells it to herself! But I must leave each one of you to think it over, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, till you, also, feel, "Herein is love,"

IV. The last thing on which I am to speak at this time is LOVE SURRENDERING THE ONLY-BEGOTTEN.

I have shown you wherein God's Love excels all other loves—it is love to the loveless, love to the sinful, love providing a propitiation. Now here is the climax of the love of God in giving up His only-begotten Son—"He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

You do not need for me to say much about this part of our subject. Will you kindly recall the story of Abraham and his son Isaac going to the mount in the land of Moriah? Put the Lord God and His well-beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the place of the Patriarch and his son, and you can see the picture of the Atonement drawn to the life before your eyes. You remember how the Lord said to Abraham, "Take now your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and get you into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell you of."

Jesus was God's Son, His only-begotten Son, whom He loved more than any of you can ever love your sons or daughters, for the love of God towards Him is ineffable, immeasurable! It is not possible for me to tell you how much God loved His Son. But that Son who had always given Him delight, in whom He was well-pleased—that Son must endure shame, agony

and death if sinners were ever to be saved! How could the Father give up His Son for such a purpose? I have sometimes felt as if I could almost rush in, and say, "No! It must not be! The price is too great to be paid for the rescue of such worthless worms as we are!" Yet, to ransom any one of us, the Son of God must be sacrificed and sacrificed, as it were, by His Father, for thus is it written, "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief." Thus, there is one point of resemblance between the offering of Isaac and the propitiatory Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ—it was the Father who had to offer up His son whom He loved so dearly. But there are many more similarities between these two offerings.

In the 22nd chapter of the Book of Genesis, we read that, "Abraham rose up early in the morning." God also rose early to make this great propitiation for our sins. In the Everlasting Covenant, before the earth was, He ordained the Sacrifice which should tear His heart. God Himself had done as Abraham did when he cut the wood for the burnt offering, that is, the Lord prepared everything for the coming, the life and the death of His Son. All that went before in the arrangements of Providence was like the chopping of the wood and the laying of it in order—even from eternity the great Father contemplated the Sacrifice on Calvary and went on with all that was necessary for its completion.

Then there was the lifting of the sacrificial knife—"Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son." That lifting of the knife in the case of Jesus was, first, when in Gethsemane's garden, the Father permitted His Son to sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. And next, when on the Cross He allowed Him to say, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" This was the knife for the sacrificing of the Son. Then came the crushing of our Redeemer's soul beneath the mass of human sin. The great upper and nether millstones of Almighty Wrath pressed and bruised the heart of the Son of God! Omnipotence put forth all its power to deal out the vengeance due to sin! It cried to Justice to be stern, sterner than ever—"Awake, O sword." Not, "Let Me use the sword," but, "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is my Fellow, says the Lord of Hosts." And into the very dust of death the well-beloved Son of God was crushed!

Remember, also, that touching little sentence about Abraham and Isaac—"They went both of them together." This was true of Jesus and His Father—Jesus a willing Sacrifice—and God as willingly surrendering His dear Son for our sakes. Never forget the Father's love in giving up His Son! It used to be laid down in theology that God "has no feeling, neither parts nor passions." Others may worship a dead, unfeeling God, if they will, but I do not! The God whom I worship can feel far more than any of His creatures can! And what He felt when He gave up His Son to die, it is not for human lips to tell. This is among the things which it were unlawful and impossible for a man to utter. Just what you would have felt if you had given your only son. Just what you would have felt if you had been Abraham and you had offered up your beloved Isaac. Just that—multiplied by infinity—did the Eternal

Father feel when He gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins! "Herein is love." Rightly did we sing just now—

"O love of God, how strong and true! Eternal, and yet always new, Uncomprehended and unbought, Beyond all knowledge and all thought. We read You best in Him who came To bear for us the Cross of shame; Sent by the Father from on high, Our life to live, our death to die." When you get home, sit down, say nothing to anybody, but just try, if you can, to realize that God actually did give up His only-begotten Son that you might live through Him, if you are a Believer in that dear Son of God and you live through Him! If He bore your griefs and carried your sorrows. If He was wounded for your transgressions and bruised for your iniquities. If He put away all your sins, then fall down at His dear feet and weep yourself away. No, rise and sing yourself away! And when you have done that, come back, again, and go forth to work for Him with all your might—and try to love your fellow men at something like the rate at which God loved you! You will never reach that climax of love, but aim at getting as near to it as you can—and God bless you in the effort!

It seems to me so sad that there should be anybody in the world who does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And very sad that there should be any poor sinner, here, who does not lay hold on eternal life as it is set forth in the Gospel. You self-righteous people, you who never did any wrong, I do not expect you to take any notice of this discourse—you are so wretchedly wrapped up in yourselves that you care nothing for my blessed Master! You are like the self-made man, of whom I have heard, who used to adore his own maker—his maker being himself.

But you who are poor and needy, burdened with sin and full of guilt, this is the God for you! This is the Christ for you! Come and have Him, come and trust Him and then sing with all of us who have believed in Him—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins!" May His blessing rest on you all, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: 1 JOHN 4; PHILIPPIANS 4:1-9.

1 John 4:1. Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. If John had need to say that in the early morning of Christianity, I am sure we ought to say it with greater emphasis today! It is certainly true in these days that, "many false prophets are gone out into the world." Therefore we, also, must, "try the spirits whether they are of God."

2. Hereby know you the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. If the doctrine of the Incarnation of God in Christ is denied, as it was by the first heretics, we may conclude that the Spirit of God is not in such teaching. Any doctrine which dishonors Christ—whether in His Person, or His offices, or His Atonement, or in any other way—you may at once conclude is not of God, for that which comes from the Spirit of God glorifies Christ. Did not our Lord, Himself, say, concerning

the Holy Spirit, "He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you"?

3. And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. The devil is up early at his evil work! We may sleep, but he never does. This is that spirit of antichrist, whereof, "you have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

4. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them. How? By argument? No, but—

4. Because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world. If God's own Spirit is in you, you need not fear any of these enemies. "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." If it were a conflict between you and others who had the Spirit of God within them, the conflict would be grievous and the issue of it would be doubtful. But now that the struggle is between the Spirit of God who is in you and the spirit of error that is in the world, you need have no question about the ultimate result of the battle!

5, 6. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God: he that knows God hears us; he that is not of God hears not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. If Apostolic teaching is denied, those who deny it are not of God, for the Spirit of God was in the Apostles, as He is also in all the Lord's true children. By this test we may try many of the spirits of the present day—"He that knows God hears us; He that is not of God hears not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." The Apostle now gives us another Infallible test by which we may "try the spirits."

7, 8. Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loves is born of God, and knows God. He that loves not knows not God; for God is Love. Where there is the spirit of enmity, of envy, of pride, of contention, there is not the Spirit of God! That which makes towards love, we may depend upon it—it came forth from love! But that which makes towards division, contention, emulation and strife, is not of God, "for God is Love."

9-12. In this was manifested the Love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that some might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought, also, to love one another. No man has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us, and His love is perfected in us. We cannot see God, but we can love God, and love, therefore, takes the place of eyes to us. When we love God, it is because He dwells in us! That is better than seeing Him—to have Him resident within our spirit, although He is not discernible by these mortal eyes!

13-16. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior

of the world. Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in Him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is Love; and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him. These words are very simple, but the lesson they convey is a very deep one. Most of them are monosyllables, but, oh, what marvels of meaning the Holy Spirit enabled the Apostle John to put into them!

17, 18. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear: because fear has torment. That is a servile fear, of course, but there is a fear which has no torment in it—that holy fear which even angels feel when they veil their faces in the Presence of the Most high. There is no torment in that reverent awe and, the more we have of love towards God, the more of that filial fear shall we have! But that slavish dread, that awful terror which begets within itself dislike, cannot live where true love is planted within the soul—

"Perfect love casts out fear."

18-20. He that fears is not made perfect in love. We love Him, because He first loved us. If a man says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God, whom he has not seen? God looked upon us with an eye that saw all our sin and misery, yet He loved us, and He wants us to have a love which, while it sees all the imperfection and all the faults in our fellow men, yet loves them notwithstanding all. If we do not love those whom we see, the Apostle says that we do but lie when we talk of loving God whom we have not seen.

21. And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loves God love his brother, also. Now let us read what another Apostle has to say, under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, upon this subject of Christian love. Turn to Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, the fourth chapter.

Philippians 4:1. Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so standfast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. It is a great joy to a minister, as it was to the Apostle Paul, to have converts. But that joy is greatly diminished when they do not stand fast—then, indeed, every supposed joy becomes a sorrow and, instead of the roses which yield a sweet perfume to the Lord's servant—thorns begin to prick and wound his heart.

2. I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. Only two women and we do not know who they were, yet Paul gives each of them a, "beseech"—"I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord." If there are only two of the most obscure Sisters in the Church who are quarrelling, their differences ought to be brought to an end at once. There should be no disagreements among Christians! Love should reign, peace should predominate. If there is anything contrary to such a state as that, God grant that it may soon be brought to an end!

3. And I entreat you, also, true yoke fellow, help, those women which labored with me in the Gospel, with Clement, also, and with other of my fellow laborers, whose names are in the Book of Life. Brother, do all the good you can to help everybody else to do good! Help those whose names are in the Book of Life, even if they are not known anywhere else. Also help the "Clement" whose name is known—be sure to help him. Indeed, help everybody! There is an office in the Church of Christ which we do not sufficiently recognize, but which ought to be abundantly filled. Paul mentions it in writing to the Corinthians. He says, "And God has set some in the Church, first Apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." It is the office of certain Christians to be "helps." May we always have many such "helps" among us! Did you ever notice that almost every time that Bartholomew is mentioned in Scripture, we read, "and Bartholomew"? He is never spoken of alone, but it is written, "Philip, and Bartholomew," or, "Bartholomew and Matthew." It is good to have some Bartholomews who are always helping somebody else, so that when there is any good work to be done, Bartholomew is always ready to share in it, for he shall also have a part in the reward at the last.

4. Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. The very word, "rejoice," seems to imply a reduplication. It is joy, and re-joy, joy over again! But here, you see, it is a fourfold rejoicing; joy, and re-joy; and again I say, joy, and re-joy! And this is to be the Christian's continual experience, for the Apostle says, "Rejoice in the Lord always."

5. 6. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. Have no care, but much prayer. Prayer is the cure for care! If you are in trouble, "Let your requests be made known," not to your neighbors, but, "unto God."

7, 8. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are honest, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there is any virtue, and if there is any praise, think on these things. Be on the side of everything that is good and right, everything that helps true human progress, everything that increases virtue and purity. As a Christian, take an interest in everything that helps to make men true, honest, just, pure, and lovely.

9. Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard and seen in me, do; and the God of peace shall be with you. May the Lord fulfill that gracious Word to all of us, "The God of peace shall be with you"! Amen.