

LOVE TO JESUS THE GREAT TEST

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, you would love Me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me.”
John 8:42.

THE order of salvation is, first, we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and we obtain a change of heart as His gift, and then that renewed heart loves the Lord Jesus in whom it has believed. Faith leads the train of divine graces, not love. It would not be preaching the gospel to say to men, “Love Christ.” Love to Jesus is an after growth. To preach the gospel is to cry, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” The faith which saves is not, however, a mere credence of facts in which men feel no interest. It is a hearty trustfulness in Jesus for blessings of which we feel the need and it is, in every case, an operative faith—a faith which works—and works by love. If you have indeed believed in the Lord Jesus Christ to the saving of your soul, then you are a child of God, for, “to as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.” If you are a son of God, you love your Father. And it is a rule that “he that loves Him that begat loves Him also that is begotten of Him.” So that true faith is the evidence of our sonship and sonship with God is attended with love—which love to the Father leads to the love of His Son, Jesus Christ. By this then shall you judge your faith this day, whether it is the faith of God’s elect or not. If it is a cold assent of the understanding, it will not save you. But if it is a warm allegiance of the heart, then it is indeed the faith which is of the operation of the Spirit of God.

I purpose this morning to speak about our love to Christ. It may help you if I give you the outline, first, of what I have to say. *Love to Christ is in itself essential.* Secondly, *love to Christ is the test of sonship*, as the text informs us. And therefore, thirdly, *love to Christ is a test which it is important for us to apply to ourselves at this time.*

I. LOVE TO CHRIST IS IN ITSELF ESSENTIAL. There are some graces in which a man may be deficient and though he may be the worse for that deficiency, still he may be a Christian. But love to Jesus is an essential grace, a grace of the heart, lying near the vitals of piety, so that the lack of it is fatal. You must love Jesus Christ if you are indeed alive unto God.

Now observe, first, that *the absence of love to Christ is the loss of one of the greatest of spiritual pleasures.* We ought to pity, as well as to blame the man who does not love Jesus Christ. Alas, poor soul, into what a state has he fallen that he should not be able to love Him who is “altogether lovely,” nor to admire Him who is the “Chief among ten thousand”? I met not long ago with a lady who had lost her taste and smell—a somewhat singular affliction. The fairest rose in the world cannot salute her nostrils with its pleasant perfume. The daintiest flavor that ever delighted men’s palate has no charms for her. She is dead to those pleasures and I could not but sympathize with her in her loss. Yet, after all, this loss of pleasurable sensation is a trifle—it will only last for a few years—and when this brief life is over she will possess every desirable faculty; but what a terrible thing to be unable to perceive the fragrance of the name of Jesus, which is as ointment poured forth. What sorrow is yours if you are unable to taste the sweet flavor of the bread of heaven, or the richness of that wine on the lees well refined which makes the saints of God so glad. I had rather be blind, deaf and dumb and lose my taste and smell, than not love Christ. To be unable to appreciate HIM is the worst of disabilities, the most serious of calamities. It is not the loss of a single spiritual faculty, but it proves the death of the soul. It evidences the absence of all that can make existence worth the having, for he that has not the Son has not life—and the wrath of God abides on him.

The absence of the love of Christ in the soul, again, is *a sign of very grievous degradation*. It is the mark of the animal that it cannot enter into intellectual pursuits. You may put before it the most delightful of studies, but the swine can never realize mental pleasure. It would be its degradation that it cannot, if indeed it had been originally intended for such pursuits. Man was made for the highest and most elevated enjoyment, the enjoyment of the presence of God and the admiration of His infinite perfections. And when he loses this power to appreciate, admire, and love his God, he sinks from his high calling to a level with the brutes. If an angel could be lowered into a dog and yet could worship God and love Christ, he would scarcely have fallen at all, compared with the fatal descent of a man who is plunged into such a stupor of evil that he cannot perceive the loveliness of the Lord Jesus Christ. We greatly pity those poor creatures of our own race who are unable to reason, but what shall we think of those who cannot love, or rather cannot love where love should center? To the poor idiot you may read the most charming lines of Milton, but he cannot rise to a sense of sublimity. You may afterwards pour into his ears the pleasing sweetnesses of Wordsworth, or the fascinating allegories of Bunyan, but he smiles at you vacantly and you perceive that his imbecile mind is incapable of comprehension. Sad it is that a human being should come down to this—and yet not to love the Lord Jesus reveals a moral and spiritual imbecility far worse than mere mental incapacity—because it is willful and involves a crime of the heart. Generally the non-appreciation of goodness is attended with an appetite for evil and therefore the ill is doubled. It was a great degradation for the king of Babylon when he left the diet of the royal table to roam the fields with the cattle and to eat grass like the oxen. It was not merely that his madness drove him from man, but it herded him with brutes. It not only took away his relish for bread but gave him a taste for grass. It was a strange madness which drove a king to graze with beasts, but not more strange than that which makes men feed upon the ashes of this world's sinful pleasures and turn aside from that which is truly bread. Oh, it is a worse insanity than that which is secluded within the walls of yonder Bedlam, this madness which can discover beauty in the painted face of the Jezebel of sin and is not charmed by the comeliness of Him whose brightness is the light of heaven. Yet, O you saints of God, remember you were such not long ago. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." "We hid, as it were, our faces from Him. He was despised, and we esteemed Him not." Our foolish heart was darkened and we saw not Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness. Blessed be the grace which has given us power to appreciate our Savior. May it increase more and more. Let us pity, as well as blame, those who now are given over to the fast closing of their eyes that they cannot see my Lord, and the shutting of their ears that they cannot hear the music of His voice, and the deadening of their hearts that they cannot perceive the charms of His love. Alas for the degradation which is manifested in inability to love Jesus!—

*"That Holy One,
Who came to earth for thee—
O basest thing beneath the sun,
That He, by any mortal one,
Forgotten ever should be."*

To be without love to Christ is a clear proof that the whole of our manhood is out of order. It would be impossible for us to be indifferent to the excellences of Jesus if we were as God created us. And inasmuch as we do not love Him till grace renews us, this proves how altogether diseased human nature has become. The understanding, were it well balanced, would judge that Christ is over all and before all and give to Him the pre-eminence in everything. But, being biased and thrown out of gear, the judgment puts Christ in the lowest place and pays its homage to the world, the flesh, or the devil, rather than to the King of kings. The mind must be altogether debased and robbed of all nobility not to love one whose self-denying benevolence commands the admiring gratitude of all renewed spirits. Did our Lord descend from heaven to earth to save His enemies? Being found on earth in fashion as a man, did He endure every insult and every misery with the sole objective of blessing others? And did He, at last, endure pangs never to be described—and all for the sake of worthless man? Then not to love such a mirror of generous affection is to be mean in spirit and base at heart. Gratitude is no very stupendous virtue, but it is necessary to deliver us from being guilty of the meanest of all the vices, for ingratitude may justly be so described. Man despising Christ who died for man is a sight enough to make an angel mourn. Yes,

seraphs might weep with wonder that a creature once so fair as man should have become so foul at heart. God forgive the mind that can be so unjust, so perverted, so bewitched and besotted as to treat Jesus with indifference.

Man's affections as well as his mind must have become terribly polluted, or he would at once love Jesus. If the heart were what it should be, it would love the good, the right, the true, the beautiful. Nothing is more good, right, true, or beautiful than Jesus Christ, the Incarnate God, and that the heart does not instinctively love Him as soon as ever it perceives Him, is clear proof that it is poisoned at its fountain. It is given unto its idols and therefore it will not love the true God. If you needed, at this time, to prove man's fallen state, you might do so by a thousand arguments, but only one would be needed. There, perhaps, was never a more powerful demonstration than that of the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, which we dare not read in public. It is a chapter which contains the most terrible of indictments against our manhood—and every word of it true. But, sirs, I take it that all the unnatural lusts into which men have fallen, though they are deeds which crimson the cheek of modesty, do not so thoroughly prove human nature to be corrupt as man's not loving Christ! A certain divine on one occasion, wishing to display his rhetoric and bring down upon himself the admiration of his hearers, exclaimed, "O virtue, you are so fair and beautiful that if you should descend upon earth, all men would love you." How greatly he erred! For virtue did descend on earth, clothed in the most attractive form, the form of pure benevolence. And yet men received her not. Virtue came in the person of our Lord Jesus, not dressed in the armor of justice, but in the silken robes of salvation, bedecked with charity and tenderness. But men refused her a habitation, denied her the common courtesies of life, and at last condemned her to die. When man crucified Jesus, he did, as much as in him lay, destroy all goodness, truth, and holiness. Then did he spit his worst venom upon everything that is lovely and of good repute, for he selected the most lovely and honored of all beings to murder by his malice. Not to love Jesus Christ is, whatever your outward character may be, dear friend, to angels and to all intelligent and purified spirits who are fit to judge, the most terrible symptom of your subjugation to a malignant spiritual disease which tyrannizes all your powers and causes you to be the opponent of your best friend.

Not to love Jesus Christ is a sure token that we have no part nor lot in His salvation, for the first effect of receiving His salvation is to love Him. You remember our Lord's parable of the two debtors. The one owed five hundred pence and the other fifty. They were both freely forgiven their debts because they had nothing to pay. And the question asked concerning them was, "Which of them will love him most?" Now mark, the question was not, "Which of them will love their generous benefactor?" for it is taken for granted and who will deny it, that whether forgiven fifty pence or five hundred, they must love him who forgave them. It is inevitable that if you have been forgiven your sin, you should love Jesus Christ. And if you do not love Him, rest assured that in His precious blood you have no portion—and His righteousness does not cover you. Solemn reflection! How essential is this excellent grace of love.

Without love to Christ it is clear that you are not saved, for *you lack the mainspring of the spiritual life*. We are often accused when telling men to believe and live, that we throw a holy life and virtuous conversation into the shade. If our objectors were candid, they would inquire whether their accusation is true, and as the result of that inquiry they would acquit us. Either ignorance, misunderstanding or malevolence must have occasioned the utterly groundless charge, for we have explained, times without number, that when we say, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved," we do not mean that the belief of an abstract proposition will save men from hell. We mean that trust in Jesus will change the heart and so save the life from sin. By salvation we mean salvation from sin, salvation from the old selfish life, salvation unto holy living. This is the salvation that we preach—salvation from evil—and this, we say, is the result of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. If these things are so, it is evident that the man who does not love Christ is not saved in this sense, for love to Christ is through the Holy Spirit made to be the mainspring and central force by which a holy life is created and sustained. "The love of Christ constrains us." This is the grand power which keeps us back from evil and impels us toward holiness. In proportion as you love Jesus, you will be holy. And in proportion as your love to Jesus becomes weak, the power of sin grows strong. And if there is no love to Jesus at all, then there are in you none of the elements which make up the Christian character—

"Knowledge, alas! 'Tis all in vain,

*And all in vain our fear;
Our stubborn sins will fight and reign
If love is absent there.”*

Not to love Christ is a thing so dreadful that those who do love Him can hardly tell you how they tremble at the bare notion of being in such a condition. Death in the most horrible form would be preferable. Many a time have we sung, and I for one have felt it at my heart's core—

*“A very wretch, Lord, I should prove,
Had I no love to Thee.
Rather than not my Savior love,
Oh, may I cease to be.”*

It would be much better never to have been born than not to love the Savior. It were better to go to annihilation, if such could be the case, than exist a moment without love to the Blessed One. Sometimes the saints of God have grown so warm concerning what is due to Jesus their Lord, and have felt such a horror at the sin of not loving Him, that they have pronounced a curse in God's name upon those who love not Christ. Perhaps the most terrible words in sacred Scripture are these—“If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be ANATHEMA MARANATHA”—cursed when the Lord shall come. It is the major excommunication of the church. It is the most solemn word of denunciation that could have fallen from apostolic pen—and yet Paul felt that he must write it—even that Paul who could not speak of the enemies of Christ's cross without tears. My dear hearer, though you are the most moral person in the world and though you are the most orthodox professor in the church, yet if you love not the Lord Jesus Christ, “Anathema Maranatha” must be sounded in your ears, for it is proclaimed in the Word of God against you.

Who would wish to live without the love of Jesus in his soul! It is the most hideous of all conditions, for it despoils our life on earth of its highest beauty and renders heaven impossible. Until He gives you love to Christ, God Himself cannot give you heaven. You may take my words in their broadest sense, for I mean them just as they stand. I say until God Himself makes you love Christ, He cannot give you heavenly happiness, for the very essence of heaven lies in the love of that which is good and true—and the essence of all goodness and truth are in Jesus Christ. Could you be carried to the place called heaven without love to Christ, you would be utterly out of your element. The nearer presence of Christ into which you would be brought would cause you terror instead of happiness. And the delight which you would see upon the faces of ten thousand times ten thousand who love Him would only provoke you to a direr enmity and a bitterer despair. Oh, my friend, you cannot know happiness till you know Christ. Till your heart beats with love to Him, the true life can never be yours, but you are in darkness and death even now, without love to Christ, and so you must abide. It is inevitable that it should be so. So I leave the first very weighty point, praying God the Holy Spirit to press it upon the hearts of all who have no affection for the Savior. It is essential that you should love Him.

II. LOVE TO CHRIST IS THE TEST OF SONSHIP. Certain modern teachers have asserted that God is the Father of all mankind—and the doctrine of Universal Fatherhood is, I am told, exceedingly prevalent in certain quarters. That God is the Creator of all men and that in this sense men are the offspring of God, is undoubtedly true. But that unregenerate men are the sons of God is as undoubtedly false. How that flesh-pleasing doctrine can be supported, I do not know, for certainly my text gives it no assistance whatever, but rather strikes it a deadly blow. “If God were your Father, you would love Me.” Consequently God is not the Father of those who do not love Christ. What do these teachers make out of the privilege of adoption? Why are men adopted, if children by nature? How is it that it is a special promise, “I will be a Father unto you and you shall be My sons and daughters”? What need of a promise of that which they have already? “To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on His name.” What does that mean if everybody already is a child of God? How do they interpret that God has begotten His people again by the resurrection of Christ unto a lively hope? Were we sons already? How were we heirs of wrath even as others if all men are in the family of God? They make use of an expression which bears two renderings to set up a theory which is destructive of the gospel. I leave those to defend that statement who care to do so. I believe it to be altogether untenable if we keep to the Word of God. The Fatherhood of God is to a special people,

chosen from before the foundation of the world and adopted and regenerated in due time, through His grace.

It appears from the text that love to Christ is the only infallible test of our sonship towards God. Those to whom Christ spoke were by nature and descent, if any in the world were, the children of God. If any men who did not love Christ could be the children of God, they were the Jews who stood before Him then for they were of the seed of Abraham, whom God had chosen. They had been brought up from their very childhood in the observance of ceremonies which God had ordained and they bore in their flesh the mark of the covenant. They were, moreover, the only people under heaven that worshipped one God. The Romans, the Greeks, and all others were idolaters. These Jews were worshippers of the one unseen Jehovah and very tenacious they were about it, for after the Babylonian captivity, nothing could make a Jew worship an idol. Whatever faults they might have, they certainly were not wanderers from the unity of the Godhead; *that* they held, and held most firmly. And, moreover, these people were, no doubt, made to suffer a good deal of abuse and reproach for worshipping the one, only, and invisible God. They were despised by their Roman masters. And the polite Greeks, with their poetic mythology, sneered at their strange worship which they considered to be mere atheism, since they saw no image set up. The Jew, therefore, stood out grandly as being, if any unregenerate man could be so, a son of God. And yet, as they did not love the Christ, they had not God for their father. Our Master tells them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me." And so He puts down all pretensions arising from their pedigree, from their circumcision, from their rites and ceremonies, from their broad phylacteries and bordered garments and everything else. Love to Christ is the great test of sonship to God. My dear hearer, if you do not love Christ, you are no child of God, for if you were, you would love what your Father loves; your nature, descended from God, would run in the same channel—and since He loves Christ supremely and above all things—so would you love Jesus Christ with all your heart beyond all the world. If you were a child of God, you would love Jesus, for you would see God in Jesus. He says, "Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me," and inasmuch as you are a child of God, you would know your Father and perceive Him in the Son, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. He is the express image of His person and the brightness of His Father's glory. And as the child loves his father, so would you love the Godhead in Jesus Christ. It would be impossible for you to do otherwise. No, not only the Godhead, but even the humanity of our Lord would win your love, for God loves holiness in man and especially in the man, Christ Jesus, and so must we. All the qualities of His human nature were brilliant with His divine holiness and therefore will be sure to command your love if you love the Father.

Every man loves that which is like himself. If you were born of God, you would love God. And Jesus Christ is God and therefore you would love Him. If you were born of God, you would be holy and true and loving and tender—and Jesus is all that—and so you would love Him. It is curious how language sometimes teaches morals. You know we have the word "like." We are said to like a thing. But the word has another meaning—we may be like to a thing. Now a man always likes that which he is like and if you are like God, you love God, to whom you are like. And being like Christ, you like Christ, to whom you are like, for like loves like, or let me say, like likes its like. There must be love to Christ in the soul if you are like to Christ, which you are if you are a child of God.

If you are a child of God you must love Christ, because of His essential divinity. For notice in the text, "I proceeded forth and came from God." I do not understand that expression—nobody does. You have heard of Dr. Dollinger and a number of learned men meeting to lay down dogmatic declarations upon the double procession of the Holy Spirit. What a foolish task. They were engaged in defining a subject which they could not possibly understand—ants met to measure the sun, insects debating upon eternity. We cannot enter into the springs of the sea, nor can we enter into the essence of Deity, or the relationships of the blessed persons of the Trinity, the one to the other. And no man ever undertakes to do so but what he goes wrong, misled by his own presumption. If any man were to undertake to look the sun in the face by the day together he would soon become blind—the light is so excessive and mortal eyes are so dim—that blindness must follow. Jesus Christ is the Son of God by what we are accustomed to call eternal filiation, or what the text calls *proceeding* from Him and therefore because of that, being

divine and proceeding from the divine Father in some mysterious sense, He is Himself to be devoutly adored. And if we are the children of God, we must love the Lord Jesus.

The text adds that we shall also love Him because of His mission. "I came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me." If we love God, we must love that which comes from God. I know when I left the village where I was first pastor and where I had loved the people much and they had loved me, I used to say if I saw even a dog which came from that parish, I should be glad to see him, for I felt a love to everything and everybody coming from that spot. It matters not how small the trifle—a little flower or a piece of leaf from the garden—you prize it, for it came from someone you revere. Ah, that little shoe of your dear babe now in heaven. Or a little piece of the handwriting of your dear mother, now with God. How dear they are! How much more should we love Christ because He came from God, and comes, not as a mere relic or memorial, but as His living, loving voice. If a child were far away in India, and he had not heard from home for some time, and he at last received a letter, how sweet it would be. It comes from Father. How pleased he is to get it. But suppose a messenger should come and say, "I came from your father"? Why, he would feel at once the deepest interest in him. Would you shut your door against your father's messenger? No, but you would say, "Come in, though it is the middle of the night, I shall always have an ear for you." Shall we not, thus, welcome Jesus?

And then, remember, while Jesus came as our Father's messenger, what a message He brought—pardon for sin, restoration from the Fall, acceptance in the Beloved and eternal life and glory. Oh, when He comes from the Father, comes for the Father, and comes with a message meant to lead us to the Father, we who are the children of God must love Him for all these reasons. It is not possible that you can be a child of God and not love the Christ whom the Father has anointed, the Messiah whom the Father has sent, the Jesus whom the Father has made to be the Savior, the Immanuel, the God With Us, the Father's self-revealed in fullness of grace and truth.

That He came not of Himself is another reason for love. When a man lives only to serve himself, our love begins to dry up for lack of secret springs, but when we perceive that Jesus Christ did not come of Himself, but was sent of the Father—that His aims and objectives were not for Himself in any degree, but entirely for the Father and for us—our heart must go out towards Him.

III. I might thus continue, but there is no need for it to show you that you must love Jesus. And so I close with the APPLICATION. Lend me your ears and hearts a few minutes.

If it be so that love to Christ is essential and is the main test of sonship, come, brethren, do we love Him or not? Now, put the question all round. I know some will say, "Love Him? Yes, that I do." Yes, but I will still ask you, for my Lord asked Peter three times, you know, "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love Me?" And I do not suppose you are better than Peter, so I must repeat the question, though you may answer it as quickly as he did, for it will not hurt you to answer aright three times—but it would hurt to answer falsely once. So let us put the question home—Do you love Jesus?

If I love Him, then I trust Him and lean on Him with all my weight.

"Ah, I do that. Blessed be His name, I know I do." Can you not speak with assurance as to that point? Tell me, then, have you any other hope besides that which springs from His dear cross and wounded side? If you have, you do not love Him. But if your trust rests wholly and alone on Him, there are the beginnings of love in you. The root of the matter is there.

If you love Him, you will keep His Word. That is the next point. He says, "If any man love Me, he will keep My Word," that is to say, he will reverence what Jesus said and endeavor to learn from His teaching. You will believe what He says and desire to know its meaning. Now, are you quite sure that you pay reverence to the words of Christ? How about your neglected Bible? How about the parts of Scripture which you have never wished to understand because you were afraid it was a little different from the articles of your church or the creed of your family? That does not look like reverence to Christ's word. My dear friend, let me put the question very pointedly. Do you want to know what Christ taught? Are you willing to believe all He reveals? Do you ask the Holy Spirit to lead you into the things of Christ? For remember, he who breaks one of the least of our Lord's commandments and teaches men so, the same shall be least in the kingdom of heaven and would you wish to be that?

Another test of love to Christ is this, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." It is not merely hearing His Word, for that the man did who built his house upon the sand. But the Lord said, "He that

hears My Word and *does* it is like a man that built his house on a rock.” “*Does it!*” “*Does it!*” Do you obey Christ? If you do not, you do not love Him. If the commands of Jesus are treated by you as matters of no importance, then your heart is not with Him. The child is to love his father, but the command by which his love is to be tested is, “Children, obey your parents in all things.” So with Jesus. If you love Him you will obey Him. Now search your hearts and look at your lives—are there not some points which might make you question? At any rate, I think there are many matters that should make us pray, “Lord, You know all things and therefore You know all my sins and all my failures, but still you know that I love you. Deliver me from sin and let me not grieve You any more.”

Now, apply that text to your heart in another form. If you love Christ you will imitate Him. It is the nature of love to be imitative. The sincerest form of admiration is imitation. If you love Jesus, you will labor to be like Him. I am sure you will. Are you trying to be Christ-like? You perceive in yourself many things that are not in Christ—do you long to get rid of those things? And you see in Jesus Christ many excellences which you have not yet reached. Are you pressing towards them? Then I know you love Him—but if there is no imitation there is no love.

Love to Christ may also be judged of by love to His people. He who loves Jesus is sure to love all others whose hearts burn with the same flame. How is it with you? “Well,” you say, “I love some of the brethren.” Yes, and so do the publicans and sinners love some of them. Certain of God’s people are so very sweet in their tempers and excellent in their natural dispositions that I should think the most wicked person in the world must love them. But the test is to love them for Jesus’ sake, even though you cannot help seeing their mistakes and faults.

“I love the saints,” says one. “At least, I love all of my denomination.” That, also, is very easy, for the Sadducees loved the Sadducees and the Pharisees loved the Pharisees. But the thing is to love God’s people, though you fear that they are in error upon certain points—and though you cannot agree with them in some of their views—and think they dishonor God by certain failures. The Christian loves all who are in Christ, not because of their soundness in the faith, but because of their union to Jesus. Come, then, do you love the Lord’s people because they are His? “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.”

And, dear friend, you may judge again whether you love Christ by this—do you sympathize with His objectives? Whenever we love another, we begin to love the things which he loves. Christ desires to see this world brought to His feet. Do you wish to see Him King over the nations? He desires to gather out to Himself a chosen people. Are you seeking to bring in His wanderers? He delights to save the sons of men. Do you wish to see them saved? Do your thoughts, wishes, and desires run in a groove with those of Jesus? If so, you love Him.

Again, do you serve His cause? For that love which never leads to action is poor love. Is it love at all? The affection which can be contented without doing anything for the beloved object is so base a thing that it were a shame to degrade that golden name of love by applying it to such a miserable counterfeit. Love Jesus! And yet you have never taught a little child His name? Love Jesus! And you are an orator and yet you never stand up to proclaim His gospel? Love Jesus? And your gold lies cankering and your silver is tarnished—and you give none of these to His work? Love Jesus! And it never costs you a night’s unrest or an hour’s distress of mind because His kingdom does not come? I thank God I do not understand your love and hope I never may. May God give you a better love than this—may He give you the love which works and shows itself in deeds.

If you love Jesus, you desire to be with Him and you are very glad of every opportunity of having special fellowship with Him. I know if you love Him, you will not be happy to live a day without Him. You will feel ill at ease if He is gone but for an hour. If you love Jesus, oh, how you pant for the time when you will see Him face to face. If you love Him, there are seasons when you become sick of love after Him, when you feel as if to die were a fleabite or a nothing if you might but behold His face. How often, when you have been to the house of God and heard a sermon that has carried you near to Jesus, you have been ready to say, like Simeon, “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace according to Your word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation”? When you have had to go back into the world again, you have almost felt unhappy to think you were bound to linger in this far-off country and you could only feel satisfied by saying, “Sun of my soul abide with me, for this world is dark and drear without Thee.”

I pass the question round again. Is there anyone here who dares not say, "I do love the Savior"? Then, my dear friend, I beseech you to look that matter in the face, for if you do not love Christ heartily and sincerely, then you are none of His. And you are none of God's—you are a child of Satan. "Well," says one, "it would not yield me any comfort to know that." No, and I do not want you to find any comfort, for comfort now would be deadly to you. A good physician does not always look to the immediate ease of his patient—he has his eyes on the cure. I want you to be uncomfortable till Jesus comforts you. I want you to be ashamed of not loving Christ until you become unhappy about it. I beg you to stand at the foot of Calvary's cross and look up and see Jesus bleeding and dying, and then say, "He has done all this, and yet I do not love Him." I wish you would go into the Garden of Gethsemane and see the bloody drops of sweat fall upon the frozen ground, and hear His cries and groans for sinners, and then say, "And yet I do not love Him." I beg you to look at Him taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb with the image of death stamped on His glorious face—a death which He endured out of pure love to His enemies—and then I would have you see if you are vile enough to say, "And yet I do not love Him." I beg you in spirit to follow Him in His resurrection and to see Him as He breathes peace over His disciples and then see if you dare say, "I do not love Him." I would wish you to see Him, by faith, rising as He ascends into glory and a cloud receives Him, and then I would like you to put your hands to your brow and feel as if your heart must burst while you say, "Yet I do not love Him." I would have you see Him sitting on His throne in all His glory, adored by myriads of the blessed, with every harp string in heaven thrilling out His praise as He sits at the right hand of the Father, and the Father takes delight in Him. Amid that splendor I would wish you to stand and begin to smite upon your breast, and say, "And yet, alas, this hard heart does not love Him." How I wish you would get to your chamber and pour your soul out in a flood of tears, to think that, by-and-by, He will come to judge the world in righteousness and to be admired of them that believe, and you, unless you are renewed in heart, will have to stand among that mighty throng that shall surround His great white throne and weep and wail and wish you never had been born, while the dire thought will flash through your mind, "I do not love Him. He is come to judge me and I am far off from Him, unsaved, uncleaned in His blood." I entreat you to think of it now, that you may not have to realize it later. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, O you unloving heart, and you shall be saved from your unloving spirit and taught to esteem Him whom to love is the best evidence of eternal life.—

*"O love beyond all mortal thought!
Unquenchable by flood or sea!
Love that through death to man has brought
The life of immortality!
You do enkindle heaven's own fire
In hearts all dead to high desire.
Let love for love our souls inflame,
The perfect love that fails never;
And sweet hosannas to your name
Through heaven's vast dome go up forever."*

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 8:21-59.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—423, 807, 377.**

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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