

CHEERING WORDS

NO. 2444

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 22, 1895
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

“As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.”
John 15:9

THE Savior was about to leave His disciples and this was the hardest trial which they had ever experienced. As there could be no trial to them like the loss of the Savior's presence, it was at this time Jesus brought forth His richest consolation. He seems to have kept the best wine and the most potent cordial till the time when their spirits most required to be comforted. He said to them more fully than He had ever said it before, “Take this for your comfort—live upon it while I am absent from you. Live upon it always—that as the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.”

But what is this richest of all cordials? What is this marrow and fatness? It is the assurance of His love to us and surely there cannot be a more delightful thought that can fill the soul of a mortal than this, “The Son of God loves me.”

Did you ever sit down for half an hour and try to masticate and digest this thought? That God should pity me, I can understand, being so far inferior to Himself and so full of misery. That He should be generous to me, I can comprehend, from the liberality and bounty of His nature and from my great necessities.

But that He should love me, is wonderful. I cannot see anything lovely in myself and there are many who see that there is much unloveliness about me—and I do not doubt that there is—and yet He who knows me better than I know myself, and is not unmindful of my infirmities and weaknesses, says He loves me.

He does not put me at arm's length and then feed me from His bounty—that would be gracious—He opens wide His bosom and takes me into His heart. He closes the golden doors and takes me in to dwell forever, that in the ivory palaces I may be made glad with the cassia and the aloes of His delightful presence.

Man, did you ever get this into you soul? Then though you may be clothed in rags, you will feel as though you were wrapped about with imperial purple. Although you may dwell in a very poor and lonely cottage, when this thought shines upon you, you would not change your cottage for a palace. Unto which of the angels did He ever say this?

I believe angels are the subjects of divine love in a certain sense, but I have never read of Christ saying to them, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.” This is the special privilege for the sons of Adam, who have fallen, which angels never have. How marvelous! And is it not more than marvelous, that God should have selected me out of the sons of Adam?

Perhaps there is nothing in any of you which you can look upon as a reason why God should love you. Did I say, “perhaps”? Why, there are ten thousand things about every one of us that might have won for us the Almighty's hatred. Instead of this, He says He loves us, His people. Surely, if I were to say no more, but sit down and leave you to think over the fact that God loves you and that your name is dear to JEHOVAH, your souls might be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.

The text, itself clearly contains two things—a *declaration* and an *exhortation*.

I. THE DECLARATION is like a door on two hinges and on these the text swings. The hinges are “as” and “so”—“As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you.” What if I call them two diamond pivots, upon which the pearly gate of love turns to shut in God’s people!

These words may be viewed in four lights. The word “as” is used here for the sake of *affirmation*. The Savior does as much as say, in the most solemn manner possible, to His believing people, “I love you and I love you as surely as My Father loves Me.”

There are a great many new doctrines starting up nowadays, and perhaps tomorrow morning there will be another. New opinions are constantly coming up, but I do not recollect ever hearing anybody say that the Father does not love the Son. Whatever new heresies there may be—and there will be plenty of them—I do not suppose that this will ever be the subject of heresy.

It is so firmly believed, that I never heard a sermon preached to prove it—it is a doctrine taken for granted and laid hold of as being an elementary truth of the Christian system. Jesus Christ, then, says, “You do not doubt that the Father loves Me. Now, just as surely as the Father loves Me, I say, solemnly and truly, that I love you.”

He says this to each of us who trusts in Him—to all of you poor, troubled Christians, who have so many cares that you would not like to count them—you to whom it was whispered, the other day,

*“The Lord hath forsaken thee quite;
Thy God will be gracious no more.”*

“No,” says Jesus, “you do not think that the Father has cast Me off or ceased to love Me? Then do not think that I have cast you off or ceased to love you. You are the purchase of My blood, and as surely as the Father loves Me, so do I still love you.”

This “as” may not only be regarded as an affirmation, but also what is very near akin to it, a *confirmation*. In order to strengthen their faith, God has been pleased to give His people not merely His Word, but tokens and signs to confirm His Word. When Noah had been delivered from the flood by means of an ark, he might still have been very timid at the first shower of rain, and have been afraid that the world was going to be drowned again.

But to remove any fears he might have had, lo, there appears in the heavens God’s bow, a bow of many colors, illustrating the joy which there should be in the hearts of those with whom God had made a covenant. Not a black bow as though it were bent on destruction, nor a crimson bow as though it were dipped in blood—but a bow of many colors, a bow turned upwards, not shooting the arrows of vengeance upon mankind, but hinting to us that we may shoot our prayers up to heaven—a bow unstrung and a bow without an arrow to show that God had ceased from warring with His creatures and had made peace with man. As soon as Noah saw that bow, he said, “I shall not be drowned, the world will not be destroyed by a flood.”

God also gave His servant David a sign when He told him that as long as the sun and moon should shine in their places, He would not break His covenant with David. The rainbow is a very sweet sign, but we cannot always see it. And the sun and moon are not always visible, so the Lord has been pleased to give to His people a sign which is always visible, a symbol which is good by day and by night, and which is not dependent upon raindrops and sunbeams.

The Christian, by the eye of faith, can always look up to heaven and see Christ in the bosom of His Father. You have no doubt, I am sure, that Christ is the object of divine affection. You can see it clearly and there is no doctrinal error at all clouding your view of the love of the Father for His Son. Now this is to me the token that Jesus Christ loves me.

I look up and see Jesus resting in His Father’s heart—and I, a poor sinner, resting upon Jesus and finding all my help in Him—know that I am in Christ’s heart and that nothing shall ever pluck me thence. I know this because I have the sign that “as” the Father loves the Son, “so” Christ loves me. May God give us grace to see and rejoice in this “as” of confirmation!

But perhaps the fullness of this meaning lies in the fact that this is an “as” and a “so” of *comparison*. I think the text means that in the same way as the Father loves the Son, just in the same way Jesus loves His people. And how does the Father love the Son? He loved Him *without beginning*. You meet with strange people sometimes, but I do not recollect ever meeting with anyone who thought that God the Father did not at some time or other love the Son.

It is commonly and currently believed amongst all who accept the Bible as true, that from everlasting to everlasting the love of God is set upon His Son. We believe that long “ere worlds were made or time began” the Lord Jesus Christ was dear to His eternal Father. Now, as the Father loves Christ, so Christ loves us, and therefore He loves us without beginning. Long before the lamps of heaven were kindled, or the stars began to twinkle in the sky—when as yet all this world slept in the mind of God as unborn forests sleep within the acorn-cup—we were in the heart of Christ.

When we rest upon Christ, we may be infallibly certain that His foreseeing eye beheld us and that His foreloving heart loved us when as yet we had no being. In the book wherein all His members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there were none of them, there He read our names, our forms, our lineaments. He saw our characters and knew our sins,

*“He saw us ruined in the fall,
Yet loved us notwithstanding all.”*

You can go back to the beginning of human affection—you can easily go back to the beginning of your love to God, but God’s love to us is a deep which has no bottom.

*“The streams of love I trace
Up to their fountain—God;
And in His mighty breast I see
Eternal thoughts of love to me.”*

And I suppose we all believe *that the Father loves His Son without any end*. You have no idea, I suppose, that at any time the Father will cease to love His own dear Son. You cannot suppose such a thing—your mind can hardly conjure up such a blasphemous thought as that there should ever be a division amongst the persons of the Trinity, and that Jesus Christ should be driven from His Father’s heart.

“Now,” says Christ, “as the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you,” that is, without end.

*“Once in Christ, in Christ for ever;
Nothing from His love can sever.”*

This is a great and precious truth, but I know some people who use it very badly, for they say, “I was in Christ once and therefore I must be in Christ now.” But that is not the question. If you were once in Christ, you are in Christ now—but can you really and truly say that you are in Christ now? Are you now resting upon Him? Are you now walking in His ways? Are you now reflecting His image? Are you now trusting that His Spirit dwells in you?

If not, I do not care what you say about having been once in Christ, for I do not believe that, unless you are in Christ now. This truth which you use as a buttress for your presumption, should rather be used as a stimulus to self-examination.

Remember, it is written, “But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” And if you have drawn back, you have given clear proof that His soul has no pleasure in you, for they who are in Christ Jesus are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation—they are preserved by Christ Jesus—they are sanctified by His indwelling Spirit, and their path, according to Solomon, “is as the

shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” God grant that we may prove our calling by our perseverance!

Let us just for a moment suck in the truth of this very precious doctrine that, as surely as the Father will always continue to love Jesus Christ, so Jesus Christ will always continue to love us. Some of us, perhaps, look forward to old age without expecting any great delight in it. There are times when the grinders fail, because they are few and they that look out of the windows are darkened.

But saint, you need not fear the loosing of the silver cord, for your God shall never change—His eye shall not wax dim—His natural force shall never abate. If you should be bowed double with infirmity, yet remember that the everlasting God faints not, neither is weary, and His love for you will never cease.

Perhaps at times we look forward to death with a sort of shiver. I know that there are seasons when even the very best of God’s servants do not find death the sweetest possible subject for contemplation, but I do not think that any of us who believe in Jesus have the slightest reason to be afraid to die. On the contrary, we may rejoice in it, for our Savior will not leave us in the hour of death.

Still is He in the Father’s bosom, and still shall we be there even when the chill floods are about us, and the boomings of the eternal waves shall be sounding in our ears. Rest confident, Christian, that even down to the grave, Christ will go with you, and that up again from it He will be your Guide and your Companion to the celestial hills.

I am sure you are all perfectly agreed, too, that God the Father loves Jesus Christ *without any change*. You do not believe, as instructed disciples, that the Father loved Jesus Christ more at one time than at another. It is our belief that when Christ said, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” He was still as dear to His Father’s heart as He ever had been. There was a hiding of His face from His Son, but not a turning away of His heart.

Can you suppose that His Father loved Him the least when He was most obedient? When He was obedient unto death and fulfilled His Father’s will at all hazards in the awful darkness, do you think that then the Father’s heart was cold and stony towards Him? Oh, no. It was but a change of manifestation, but His inward love was still the same!

Now, Christian, take this for your own comfort, that there is never any change in Jesus Christ’s love to those who rest in Him. Yesterday you were on Tabor’s top and you said, “He loves me.” Today you are in the Valley of Humiliation, but He loves you just the same. On the hill Mizar and far away among the Hermons, you heard His voice which spoke so sweetly with the turtle-notes of love.

And now, on the sea, or even in the sea, when all his waves and billows go over you, and deep calls unto deep at the noise of His waterspouts, He is just as loving to you as ever He was. He does not change one whit. If you lived in certain lands, you might look up and see on the mountain some glorious old peak lifting its snow-white head into the clouds. When you look up the next morning, can you see the mountain? No, you see nothing but fog. Is there no mountain? Oh, yes,

*“The mountains, when in darkness hidden,
Are real as in the day.”*

So is it with you. You look up today and see your Father’s love and rejoice in it—tomorrow you may not see it so clearly, but it has not gone, for it abides fixed and stable, and never changes. Gourds may grow and wither, but God’s love neither grows nor withers—it knows not the shadow of a change. As the Father loves Christ without change, so does Christ love us without change.

Once more, and then we shall entrench upon another interpretation of the word “as.” I think it also means that the Father loves the Son *without any measure*. I was going to say that this is an “as” of *degree*, but it is a degree without any degree, or rather, it is a degree which cannot be measured.

You cannot say of the Father’s love to the Son that He loves Him up to such a point and there stops—and you cannot say of Jesus Christ’s love to His people that He loves them so much, but does not love them any farther.

*“Oh, no; Christ loves His church,
His glory 'tis to bless;
He cannot love her more,
He will not love her less.”*

The whole heart of Christ was emptied into His people's hearts. You say His people's hearts could not hold it all? Very likely, but that is no reason why Christ did not give us all. If I cannot hold all the sea, yet God may give me all the sea. The Christian is filled with all the fullness of God. He has as much of Christ in him as he can hold. He is in Christ and Christ is in him. He dwells in God and God dwells in him.

Both of these are Scriptural expressions. There is no conceivable limit to the love of God to us in Jesus Christ, and if you need proof of it, go to Calvary, and see there how He gave Himself for us—how He was stripped naked to His shame, that He might clothe us. How He spared neither hands, nor feet, nor head, nor back—nay, how He spared not even His own heart, but poured out from it blood and water.

“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for” those whom He loves. There cannot be greater love than that of Christ. He went as far as infinity could go in love, and do you know how far that is? No.

*“Imagination's utmost stretch
In wonder dies away”*

at the thought of infinite love stretching its wings and putting itself forth to its highest pitch. Such is Jesus Christ's love to you.

What was that you said the other night? That you were afraid you would exhaust the patience of God? A little fish said once he was afraid he would drink the sea dry, but there was never any the less water in the sea for all that he drank, for he was in the sea and all he drank was in the sea still. So all that we get from God is still in God, for “in him we live, and move, and have our being.”

If you could give to a poor man in the street any quantity of money and still have just as much in your own pockets, nay, if you could still have the same money in your own pockets that you had given to him, the man would say, “Well, giving does not impoverish you, restraining does not enrich you, therefore you may well give freely.”

Oh! there are some of us who have such large appetites for divine love. I have sometimes felt such hungering after my God that I thought my soul could never be satisfied. I have thirsted after Him till I have felt like behemoth, who trusts that he can drink up Jordan at a draught. But there is enough in God to satisfy all our soul's needs.

We sometimes sing what is strictly true,

*“All my capacious powers can wish,
In Thee doth richly meet.”*

Come, then, beloved, you have a full Savior, a precious Savior, one who loves you without measure, without any degree, even as the Father loves Him! There is much food here for those who know how to feed upon it. May the Holy Ghost help us so to do!

II. Let me now ask your patient attention while I speak upon THE EXHORTATION OF THE TEXT, “Continue ye in my love.”

“What, what!” says one, “does He love us with an everlasting love and yet thus admonish us, ‘Continue ye in my love?’” Yes, yes—the certainty of the thing does not at all weaken the force of the precept. This is God's plan, to work out His own purpose by an exhortation.

Diligent students of God's Word must have noticed that the very things which in one part of Scripture are spoken of as unconditional gifts, are in other parts spoken of as blessings to be anxiously desired and eagerly sought after. The two things are correct and consistent one with the other, only some people get one of their eyes bound up, so that they are not able to see two truths at a time.

I am thankful if you can see one, but I should be still more glad if you could see two, because I think that then you would be more like the perfect man in Christ Jesus, who enters into life with both eyes. You find in one place that God is exhorting His people to good works as if their good works were all their own—and yet in another place He tells them that their good works are the gifts of His Spirit.

In one place He tells the saints that they shall hold on their way and in another place He exhorts them to hold on their way. This is not at all inconsistent, because the exhortation, by God's grace applied to the heart, ministers to the fulfillment of the decree.

My good old grandfather, I think, was quite right, when he said, "I rest my salvation upon the finished work of Jesus Christ as if I had never performed a good work in all my life, and then I endeavor to do good works as if everything depended upon them." This is what the Savior seems to say to His disciples, "Continue ye in My love, continue in the path of obedience, in the path of faith, and by your keeping of this exhortation shall My purpose be fulfilled, and you shall be preserved in My love."

Not that this is exactly the meaning of the text. Although this may lie on the surface, it seems to me rather to suggest such counsel as this, "*Continue to exhibit to others the love which I have exhibited to you.*" Some professed Christians never get into Christ's love at all in this sense of it. It strikes me that one of the truest signs of grace in the young Christian is his love to others.

As soon as ever he is himself saved, he wants to have other people saved. I do not believe that heaven is a place into which, if I get, I shall be eternally happy at the thought of other people being shut out. On the contrary, I look forward to it as the place where Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied—and it is not a little that will satisfy Him!

If you ever get any comfort from the thought of others being shut out, you may keep your comfort to yourselves. My comfort is, and I hope it always will be, to labor to be the means of bringing others in. Oh, to bring sinners to Christ! Oh, to feel the same love beating in our hearts which Christ has beating in His—not to the same degree, of course, but the same kind of love.

Oh, to be baptized into that same river of love in which Christ was baptized, and to come out of it to continue in the same sort of love, so as to have the same love to others which Jesus Christ had to us! Do not be afraid of having too much love for precious souls. Do not think that you will ever go beyond the love of Jesus Christ in that matter. Poor cold hearts as we are, how shall we warm into anything like His affection?

***"Did Christ o'er sinners weep,
And shall our cheeks be dry?"***

Ah, there are some cheeks that were never wet with the tear for others yet. And there are some hearts that never were ready to break for the conversion of others! "Well," says one, "every tub must stand on its own bottom." Yes, sir, and if you trust to yourself, it will be to your everlasting ruin. If you have found honey, your first desire is that another should taste of its sweetness, and having found Christ yourself, your first instinct will be to turn round and say to others, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world."

I find that when I preach the Gospel without tenderness, I do not get such a blessing as I do when it melts my own soul. It is a good thing when the preacher finds his own heart breaking. Heart-broken ministers are very soon made heart-breaking ministers. Love to others has a kind of sympathetic influence, and under the blessing of God the Holy Spirit, when men see that we care about them, they are often led to care about themselves. May all Christians here get fully into Christ's love and learn to

look at sinners as Christ looked at them in all their awful danger—and weep over them even as Christ wept over Jerusalem!

I think, however, that the Savior meant even a little more than this. Sometimes we get into Christ's love and *enjoy it in our own hearts*. It is the sweetest thing this side heaven to know and enjoy the love of Jesus Christ, to have our head lying on His bosom, so that we can feel His heart beat, and then to hear Him say, "I have loved thee and given Myself for thee."

You know this, don't you? Then I know your prayer will be, like that of the spouse, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine." I do not know how it is with you, but I find it rather more easy to get into this state than to stay there. I can get up the mountain, by God's grace, but the difficulty is to stay there.

Peter said, "It is good for us to be here; let us build three tabernacles." Yes, but it is not so easy to build one tabernacle upon the mountain. Christ's love-visits are so often like those of angels—few and far between! But yet we cannot blame our Beloved. Forbid it, my tongue, that you should ever say a word against Him. No, He would never turn me out of doors. The fault is my own—it is I who leave the table and refuse to stay with Him any longer. Oh, may His love bind us so fast to the altar that we may never stray from it, but may continue in His love!

"Well," says one, "I do not think that any man could keep long in communion with Christ if he had as many troubles as I have." Did you ever read about Enoch? We are told that he lived three hundred and sixty-five years and walked with God. And if Enoch walked with God so long, do you think that you cannot walk with Him for the few years of your short life?

"Oh!" you say, "but Enoch was differently situated from what I am." And yet it is written, "Enoch walked with God...and begat sons and daughters," which seems to say that the common engagements of life and the ordinary cares of a family need not break off our walking with God. "But" you say, "he did not live in such times as these." No, he did not live in such good ones, for he lived before the rising of the Sun—he lived in the twilight, in the dim, dark ages before the great Sun of Righteousness had arisen with healing beneath His wings. Enoch walked with God nearly four hundred years, but there are some of us who cannot walk with Him for four hundred hours!

Oh, may the Lord grant us more grace, for that is where the mischief lies! The most of God's people, I am afraid, are in the condition of being just alive. Sometimes a man is washed up on a rock and you put your hand to his bosom to see if there is any heat left in him, and hold a looking-glass to his nose to see if he has any breath.

You look for signs and evidences, and at last you say, "Yes, he is alive." And this is just like a great many of you. You have to look for signs and evidences to know if you are alive. You are just washed up on the rock and that is all. But look at many of us here—we do not need signs and evidences. We are alive and we know that we are. We can talk and laugh, and eat and drink, and engage in business. We are perfectly sure that we are alive because we are in good health.

And so it is with Christians when they get to be in good sound spiritual health and are enabled by divine grace to do much for their Master. I should not be satisfied with being merely alive, if I were lying stretched upon the bed and someone should say to me, "Well, you know you are alive," I should tell him that I was not satisfied merely with that—I wanted to be healthy and well. God grant that we may not only know Christ's love, but that we may get into the soul of it, into the marrow and fatness of it—till we live in it—and then may God's grace help us to continue in it!

But there are some poor souls here who have never got into this love at all, nor do they know anything about it. Perhaps, dear friends, you desire to know it. Well, there is only one place where you can see it. The window through which you can look into God's heart is the cross of Christ. If you want to read the love of God, go and look through the wounds of the Savior, and as you stand looking through those wounds, you will, if you listen, hear a voice saying,

"Love's redeeming work is done;

Come, and welcome, sinner, come.”

I have never heard of Jesus Christ shutting the door against a sinner.

There is a notice that is put in some gentlemen's parks, stating that they do not allow beggars or dogs there. But Jesus Christ puts up a notice that He does allow beggars. In fact, there are none but beggars who ever go to Him—and even those who are such beggars that you would not pick their clothes from a dunghill, Jesus Christ receives into His house, into His heart, into the bath of His blood, and wraps them in the robe of His perfect righteousness.

O poor sinner, come and try Him, and He will not cast you out!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 15

1. *I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.*

Not only the Mosaic law, but the whole creation is full of types of Christ. All the vines that we see in this world are only as it were typical, but Christ is the substance—the substance of nature as well as of grace, “I am the true vine,” and the real Husbandman, who watches over everything, who has the whole church, yea, the whole universe, under His care, is the great Father, “My Father is the husbandman.”

2. *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away:*

It has no right to be there, for it is not there by a vital union. It will only harbor mischief if it is allowed to remain, therefore let it be taken away—and taken away it certainly will be by the Husbandman who makes no mistakes.

2. *And every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.*

So there is taking away for the fruitless branches and pruning for the fruit-bearing branches. Are you suffering under the pruning knife just now? Accept it joyfully. How much better that the knife should cut off your superfluities than that it should cut you off! The mercy is that, although God will purge and prune His vine-branches, He will not destroy them.

3. *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.*

Christ had so dealt with His disciples that He left them like a pruned vine, ready and prepared for fruitfulness.

4. *Abide in me, and I in you.*

The pruning is nothing without the abiding in Christ. You may suffer again and again, but no good can come of it except you have vital, continuous, everlasting union with Christ. You cannot take a branch away from the vine for a little while, and then put it back again—its life depends upon the perfect continuity of its union.

So is it with us and Christ—the branch is in the vine and the vine is in the branch. The very essence and sap of the vine are in the branch even as the branch is part and parcel of the vine.

4-5. *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches:*

You are not the vine—do not think that you are—and if God blesses you, and makes you of some importance in the church, yet do not dream that you are the church, that you are the very root and stem of it. Ah, no! at the utmost, “ye are the branches.”

5. *He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit:*

Oh, what a searching word is this! Are we bringing forth much fruit? I trust, dear brethren, that we are bringing forth some fruit, but, oh! what a test is this, “He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.” Christ expects much from those who have this doubly high privilege of having Him in them and of being themselves in Him.

5-6. *For without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

And are there sufficient of them for that? It is enough to bring tears into one's eyes to think that there should be enough fruitless, unabiding, merely nominal members of Christ to pay for gathering up to make a fire. Oh, sad, sad thing is this! It is the grief of the church, it is the sorrow of God's ministers, it ought to call for great self-examination in our own hearts that mere professors, those who apostatize after having made a profession of religion, do not seem to have been thought by the Saviour to be here and there one, but to be so many that "men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

7. *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*

Power in prayer is dependent upon full enjoyment of union and communion with Christ. It is not every man who can ask of God what he wills, and get it, but it is such a man, and such a man only, as shall be found abiding in Christ, and having Christ's words abiding in him.

If we do not take notice of what Christ says, can we expect that He will take notice of what we say? If we do not obey Him when He asks this and that of us, how can we reckon that He will give us this and that when we ask it of Him? No, this is the condition of power in prayer, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

8. *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*

You shall be known to be the disciples of the much fruit-bearing Saviour. He was no moderately good man, He was not one who was only a little useful in the world, but our blessed Master was perfectly consecrated, He abounded in every good word and work, and unless we are the same, how shall men think that we are His disciples?

9. *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you:*

Matchless, matchless word! The love of God the Father to the Son is the immeasurable measure of the love of Christ to His people—without beginning, without end, without change, without bounds. As the Father loved Christ, so has Christ loved us.

9. *Continue ye in my love.*

Abide in it, live in it as the fish lives in the stream, enjoy it, do nothing contrary to it.

10-11. *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*

When Christ cannot rejoice in us, you may rest assured that we cannot rejoice in ourselves. But when His grace so operates upon us that He sees that in us which gives Him content, then it is that we shall feel a blessed content ourselves.

12. *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.*

I am sure you will never love each other too much. You cannot go beyond this rule, "Love one another, as I have loved you."

13. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*

What more has he that he can lay down when, having given up all else, he gives life itself for them?

14. *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*

You cannot be His friends if you are disobedient to His commands. An act of disobedience is unfriendliness—ay, and the omission of obedience is unfriendliness to Christ. I wish we would always remember that every sin, either of omission or of commission, is an unfriendly act towards our best Friend.

15. *Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.*

The law made man do this and that, but it communicated very little of the secret counsels of God. But there is a holy familiarity between Christ and His people, a sacred confidence which Christ has

manifested towards us in revealing the very heart of God to us, and therefore we are put upon a very high standing, not as servants now, but as friends. O friends of Christ, show yourselves friendly by your entire obedience to His gracious will!

16. *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that their fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*

Fruitfulness, perseverance, and power in prayer, these are the priceless boons that come to us through our being one with Christ.

17. *These things I command you, that ye love one another.*

As if there were many things in one in that command—It is but one command, but it is so comprehensive that all the commandments are fulfilled in this one, “that ye love one another.”

18. *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.*

So you need not be at all surprised if the world hates you.

19. *If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.*

Therefore expect it, in some form or other, for you will be sure to meet with it. The seed of the serpent never will love the seed of the woman.

20-21. *Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me.*

“If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin”—as if all the rest would scarcely have been sin at all in comparison with that sin against the light which men committed after Christ had spoken to them. What a wonderful thing it is that the very word which is the creation of all good should, through the perversity of men’s will, become also the creation of evil!

22-23. *If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also.*

There is a hatred of God in all hatred of the Mediator. Men may say that they love God, and yet despise Christ, but it cannot be so. Christ is so truly God, and so clear a manifestation of God, that, if men knew God, they would certainly hate Him if they hate Christ.

24-27. *If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shalt bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.*

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—196, 761, 797

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