

CHRIST'S LOVE TO HIS SPOUSE

NO. 2488

A SERMON
 INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S-DAY, OCTOBER 25, 1896
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 AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
 ON LORD'S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 5, 1886

“Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”
Ephesians 5:25

THE love of Jesus—what a theme it is! The apostle said that it passeth knowledge, and if it passes knowledge, much more does it excel any description that can be given of it. The heart may feel it better than the tongue may speak it. If there is one subject more than another upon which I wish ever to speak, it is the love of Christ, but if there is one which quite baffles me, and makes me go back from this platform utterly ashamed of my poor feeble words, and of the tongue which has uttered them, it is this subject. This love of Christ is the most amazing thing under heaven, if not in heaven itself.

How often have I said to you that if I had heard that Christ pitied us, I could understand it. If I had heard that Christ had mercy upon us, I could comprehend it, but when it is written that he actually *loves* us, that is quite another and a much more extraordinary thing. Love betwixt mortal and mortal is quite natural and comprehensible, but love between the infinite God and us poor sinful finite creatures, though conceivable in one sense, is utterly inconceivable in another. Who can grasp such an idea? Who can fully understand it? Especially when it comes in this form—“HE” (read it in large capitals) “loved me, and gave Himself for me”—this is the miracle of miracles!

I feel the more embarrassed with my subject, at the very entrance upon it, because this love of Christ is here positively likened to the love of a husband to his wife, and is so likened to it as to be made the model of what the husband's love to his wife should be, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” I should never have dared to draw the comparison, nor should any man have drawn it, but that the Holy Ghost, Himself moved the pen of Paul to write it, and this being the case, we shall not be intruding into the secret places of the Most High if we now enter upon the consideration of this wondrous theme.

Verily, I may well say, as the apostle does in the thirty-second verse, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” It is a mystery, a subject far too deep for the mere intellect to dive into its depths, and too sacred for us to think or speak of except with utmost solemnity of heart. How shall I order my speech in the presence of such a subject as this? How shall I be free and yet be guarded? How shall I take you to the edge of this great sea of truth, and even venture into it without getting at once out of my depth?

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church,” a parallel is drawn between poor mortals like ourselves who occupy the position of husbands and our glorious Lord who is God over all, blessed for ever. In boundless condescension He deigns to occupy the same kind of place in reference to His church, which He calls His bride, He Himself being the Bridegroom who is soon to come. Again I say that I should never have thought of such a comparison had not the Holy Spirit Himself put it before us, and invited us to consider it.

So, dear friends, with great reverence, let us think, first, of *how Christ loves the church*, then secondly, *how He has proved His love by giving Himself for the church*, and then thirdly, let us make the practical inquiry, *how shall we think of this wondrous love of Christ?*

I. First then, HOW DOES CHRIST LOVE HIS CHURCH?

I cannot help beginning by saying that *Christ loves His church specially*. There would be no parallel whatever between the husband's love to the wife and Christ's love to the church if there were not a speciality about it. Christ is love itself, He is full of kindness and benevolence. In that sense, He loves all mankind, but that cannot be the meaning of the text, for it would be a very strange kind of exhortation to the husband if that were the case. No, the husband's love to his spouse is something special and particular, and it stands quite alone, and all by itself. He will be kind and benevolent and generous towards all others, but that love which he lavishes upon his wife he must give to nobody else in the world.

It is certainly so with our blessed Lord. Free and rich and overflowing in lovingkindness, yet He made a special choice of His people or ever the earth was, and having chosen because of His love, He loves because of His choice, and that love is a peculiar, special, remarkable, pre-eminent love such as He bestows upon no one else of all the human race. It must be so, or else the passage would be all but immoral, certainly it would be manifestly incorrect.

There is then, a special love which Christ has towards His own church, towards all believers, towards His chosen people, towards those whom His Father gave Him, of whom He says, "They are mine." I may invite each of you who are included in either of these descriptions to drink in the sweetness of that gracious text, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." That means, "I have loved thee with a special and peculiar and distinguishing love." As many of us as believe in the Lord Jesus Christ are distinguished by the enjoyment of a love which is all our own.

Dear fellow Christians, let us never forget this amazing love, and as Christ loves us so specially, let us feel that we are bound to love Him specially. Let us give to Him all our heart's affection, for He is a jealous Savior, and He will have our entire love, so let us render it to Him, not of compulsion, but with a joyous willingness. Love dies in the presence of compulsion, it will wear no chains except its own silken fetters. But it flies, oh, how swiftly! on its own strong wings when once it perceives its beloved object. Christ loves His church then, specially, as good John Kent sings—

***"He loved the world of His elect,
With love surpassing thought;
Nor will His mercy e'er neglect
The souls so dearly bought."***

And next, I ask you to notice what is not always the case with regard to the husband and the wife, that *the Lord Jesus loves His church unselfishly*, that is to say, He never loved her for what she has, but what she is, nay, I must go further than that and say that He loved her, not so much for what she is, but what He makes her as the object of His love. He loves her not for what comes to Him from her, or with her, but for what He is able to bestow upon her.

His is the strongest love that ever was, for He has loved uncomeliness till He has changed it into beauty, He has loved the sinner till He has made him a saint, He has loved the foul and filthy till He has washed them with water by the Word, and presented them unto Himself without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. We love because of loveliness apprehended and perceived, but Christ loved because He would impart His own loveliness to the object of His choice.

Even the best of men, doubtless, love in some measure from selfish motives, there is some mixture of self-interest in all human love, but Christ had nothing to gain by loving His church. He was very God of very God, the adored of angels, and the beloved of the Father, yet He fixed the eyes of His love—mark you, not of His pity merely, but of His *love*—upon those whom He had chosen out of the race of men. He loved them, not for anything that He could ever gain from them, for He had all things in Himself, but because of what He would impart to them. They had nothing of good in themselves, and were only fit to be loved by Christ because, like empty vessels, their very emptiness fits them to be receivers of His fullness. In no other sense are we ever fit to be loved by Christ.

As the sun chased the darkness away from the world, and still prevents it from going back into the darkness, so did Christ love a poor, fallen, darkened company of mortals, and loved them into light, and love, and joy, and still loves and enlightens them, and keeps them where they are. Oh, what a wondrous love is this! Let our souls rejoice and be glad therein.

Further brethren, as Christ's love to His church is a love of choice and of specialty, and of marvelous unselfishness, so I believe—although I do not understand how it can be so—that *it is a love of complacency*. The husband's love to his wife is not the love of a parent to a child, it is not the love of the philanthropist to the object of distress that he relieves, it is something very different from either of these forms of love.

It may be that the husband confers benefits upon his wife as the result of his love, and he should do so, but still, the love of the husband to the wife puts them somehow on a level with one another. She has complacency in him, and he has complacent delight in her. If a husband only loved his wife with a feeling of pity towards her, with the notion of relieving her, and so forth, that would be a very poor kind of relationship, and though I speak with abated breath as I say it, I do believe that the blessed Lord Christ takes complacency in His people.

That we should delight ourselves in Him, is very easy to understand, but that He should delight Himself in us, oh! the very thought of it is ravishing to my heart. Even in the Old Testament Scripture, our Lord said to His chosen, "Thou shalt be called Hephzibah," that is, "My delight is in her."

Is it really so, that the infinite God takes delight in His chosen people? Here is another passage to confirm it, "My delights were with the sons of men." Does Jesus find delight in men? Ay, that He does, and you know how He said to those who were the representatives of His church in His lifetime on earth, "I have called you friends," and He did seem to find a solace in their company. Even when He had risen from the dead and had no more work to do for their redemption, yet He came to them that He might enjoy their society.

Poor, fallible, half-instructed men they were, yet He found His pleasure in them. He used to speak of them in this way, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren." He is not ashamed to call us brethren, and in that rapturous Song of Songs, which is the very Holy of Holies of our blessed Bible, He does not hesitate to speak of His beloved as His spouse, and to use to her all those endearing terms which prove that He takes great delight in her.

Think of it, my soul, that Jesus takes great delight in you. He became a man and it was not good even for such a man to be alone. He could not rest till He had found you out, and had wooed and won you. Will you ever deny Him your company, will you refuse Him your heart of hearts, will you hide from Him the secret of your soul? If so, you do a grievous wrong to Him who has deigned to stoop from the throne of His eternal glory to take delight in the company of His creature, man!

I have looked abroad upon creation, and have seen all kinds of beautiful birds and intelligent beasts, yet have I never seen any towards which I would stoop to make them my intimate acquaintances, and marry them in the heart of my love. No, we would not stoop even that little distance, but we were infinitely below the Son of God, yet has He chosen us. He felt that He could link His destiny with ours—I put it not too strongly, for that is what He has really done.

He has become the Head of His body, the church, He has become the Husband of His chosen bride. He has, as it were, entered into the same boat with His people. He has made a household whereof we twain are the companion parts, Himself the Husband and His church the spouse. Oh, who shall tell it all out? I do but touch the surface of this boundless sea as with a swallow's wing, happy are you if you dare to plunge into its depths.

There is then, between Christ and His church, to make a parallel between the love of the husband to his wife, a love of complacency.

And being a love of complacency, in such a case as this, there is *an intense love of sympathy*. The true husband and wife are so united that they share each other's joys and sorrows without making any effort to do so. It comes naturally to them, they cannot avoid it. And oh! let us tell out this great truth,

the sympathy between Christ and His people is absolutely perfect. If He sees us in sorrow, He feels it in His heart. He was Himself encompassed with infirmity, when He was here, and tempted in all points like as we are, that He might know all the trials of the church He loved, and now in heaven, as He has shared our sorrows, He decrees that we shall share His joys. He wishes us even now to let our hearts beat in sympathy with His triumph and His victory, I wish we would do so, why should we not?

Our Husband is on the throne, then let us begin to reign with Him. He has raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenlies, then let us have faith enough to claim what is really ours in Him. Remember that quaint couplet of which good old Rowland Hill was so fond, and sing it yourself—

*“But this I do find, we two are so joined,
He’ll not be in glory and leave me behind.”*

Still better, recollect that word of power which fell from our Lord’s blessed lips while here below, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory.” He has a perfect sympathy with us, and we should have a like sympathy with Him. Blessed be His dear name that He should ever have entered into such bonds of love as these with such poor creatures as we are!

Nor is that all. While it is very blessed to know that Christ has this love of sympathy, He has, further, *a love of communion*. Without this, there could be no parallel with domestic life, which includes much of happy communion and loving conversation.

A brother minister said to me the other day, when we were talking to one another about what the Gospel has done for men, “Did you never think what a wonderful thing the Gospel is, that it has made possible such happiness as you and I enjoy in our domestic relationships?” And of course I heartily responded to that remark, for if there is anything that is a miniature picture of heaven upon earth, it is a pair of Christians happily united, whose children grow up in the fear of the Lord, and render to them increased comfort and joy every day. Oh, how much some of us owe to the Gospel for the happiness of our homes!

There could however, be no such happiness in married life if there were no conversation, no communion, and our Lord Jesus Christ so loves His church that He often converses with her. He so loves each one of His people that if we are only willing to have it so, we may walk with Him, and we may talk with Him, and He will speak with us as a man speaks with his friend.

Oh, my brother, if you do not every day commune with Christ, whose fault is it? Not His, but yours, for He loves you so that He would never let you be away from Him if you were not so wayward, and so easily turned aside by little things. Yes, He manifests Himself to us as He does not to the world. I am not going to tell out here all that He says, all the ways in which He manifests Himself to His people, we could not tell, but there are times of such real delight in fellowship with the Lord Jesus, that we can only say with Dr. Watts—

*“My willing soul would stay
In such a frame as this,
And sit and sing herself away
To everlasting bliss.”*

The pith of all that I have said—and I have much more to say than time will permit—is just this. It is an extraordinarily thing that *Christ has entered into positive unity with His people*. Unity, mark you, for that is the essence of the marriage bond. We are one with Christ, who made Himself one with His people. Have you ever realized this, even you who are the best-tutored of the children of God? Have you ever taken a firm hold of this great truth, and gripped it so that you will not let it go?

Come back to what I said a little while ago, that Christ has linked His destiny with yours, His honor with yours, His life with yours, His happiness with yours. You must be in heaven, or else He will be bereaved. You must be in heaven, or else He will be imperfect. You are a member of His body, and if

He should lose one of His members, then His body would not be perfect, nor the Head either. You are joined unto the Lord and you are “one spirit” with Him, and you may bravely say, “Who shall separate us?” for such is this eternal union that there is no separation between Christ and the soul that is joined to Him.

“The LORD, the God of Israel, saith that he hateth putting away.” In the olden times, the husband might give his wife a letter of divorce, and put her away, but God says that He hates putting away, and He will never divorce those who are joined to Him. What a marriage this is!

Do you know, dear friend, what I am talking about? I cannot speak of it as I would, but it is true, and that is the wonder of it. It is no fiction, no myth, no mere figure of speech, but it is really so in deed and in truth. For this cause Christ left His Father, and became one with His church, that henceforth they should no more be twain, but one, and now we who have believed in Christ Jesus are one with Him in time and to eternity. His love has made it so, and we may paraphrase the words we read just now, and say, “Behold, what manner of love the Bridegroom hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the spouse of Christ!”

I have but very imperfectly spoken upon this part of my subject, but I must not linger longer on this most delightful theme.

II. I now ask you briefly to notice HOW THE LORD JESUS PROVED HIS LOVE TO HIS CHURCH, “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”

I will not at first restrict the meaning of this text to what is the real essence of it, but I will just observe that *Christ gave Himself for His church when He was born into the world*, when He did not disdain the virgin's womb, but was born of Mary, wrapped in swaddling bands, and laid in a manger. The angels have never ceased to wonder at this great mystery of godliness.

The God who made the heavens and the earth, the God who upholds all things by the word of His power, lay as an infant in the manger of Bethlehem, because there could be no manifestation of His love to His people unless it could be said that they twain were one flesh. So He became bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, most surely and truly man, with all the sinless infirmities of our nature, and liable even to death in order to be fully one with us. Oh, how really He gave Himself for us when He thus became a babe, a child, a man!

That being done, *He gave all His life here on earth for us*. He did nothing for Himself, it was all for us, for His church. His whole life was for her righteousness, for her example, for her teaching, and for her quickening. He loved her with no view but the glory of the Father by the salvation of His chosen.

Nor was that all, it was indeed but the beginning. Having given His Godhead by the assumption of our humanity, having given His life by spending it all for us, *Christ gave Himself up to death for our sins*. He went up to the felon's gibbet, the cross of Calvary, and there He gave His hands and feet to the nails, and His heart to the spear. Laying down His body for us, but at the same time laying down His soul and spirit, He suffered that dread doom of being forsaken of His God, so that He cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

There, when you see His pale body, like a withered lily broken at the stalk—when you see the holy men and women wrapping Him in spices, and laying Him in Joseph's tomb—you understand how He loved us, and gave Himself for us, dying in our stead, a propitiation and atonement for our sins. He loved us so as to die for us. He could not have died had He not become man, but being found in fashion as a man, and partaking of our human nature, it was possible for Him to prove the utmost extent of His love by laying down His life for us.

Oh, could you not kiss those dear cold feet? Do you not half wish that you could have been there to wrap Him in the spices and fine linen, and to lay Him in the grave? But remember that He now lives, our heavenly Lover lives. He has proved His love by giving up His life, but now He has His life back again, and He has gone home to His Father, He has gone back to the royalties He quitted, and put on again all the splendor which for a while He laid aside.

Yet He does not love us any the less, *for He gives Himself for us still*. He acts the part of Intercessor for His church. For Zion's sake He does not hold His peace, and for Jerusalem's sake He does not rest. Nor will He, He is crowned that His church may be crowned, He is enthroned that she too may come to the throne, and He will further prove His love by and by, for He has so given Himself for us that He is bound to come again, to fetch home His affianced when she is prepared for Him, and the heaven above is prepared for her. Then shall He come in all His glory, and she shall be brought to Him in raiment of needlework, in all the splendor of His righteousness, and for ever and ever shall there be nothing but joy and blessedness.

What I am driving at, and what I want every Christian here to get at, is this thought. Whatever Jesus Christ is—and you do not know half of what He is, even you who know most of Him—whatever Christ is in any relationship, or from any point of view, He has given Himself to us. Not merely has He given His thoughts, and His actions, and His wisdom, and His power, and His wealth, but *He has given Himself to us*.

Oh, I do like to think of this! All that I can imagine Christ to be must still fall far short of Himself. It is Himself that we love, and I would sooner have Christ than have heaven. It is Himself we love, and I would sooner have Christ than His crown. It is Himself we love, and I would sooner have Christ than all the golden streets. It is Himself that we love, and it is Himself that belongs to us, not merely the sight of His eyes, but His eyes themselves; not only the love of His heart, but His heart itself. Himself, His Godhead, and His manhood, the complex person of the Christ of God is given to His church.

I feel as if I do not know how to talk at all about this great truth. Some brother cried out this morning when I was speaking, and I noticed that somebody else immediately followed him, but oh! if ever there is a time for crying out—and yet, on the other hand, if ever there is a time for being struck with silence—it is when we get on this topic of Christ's love to His people. I feel as if I wanted to run off this platform and just get home, and shut to the door, and sit down, and weep to the praise of this mighty love, and then I should want to get up, and run back again, and say, "What a fool I was not to tell you all I could about it!"

May God the Holy Ghost help you to realize it! That you are loved by anyone, is a joy, for love is a precious thing, whoever gives it. But you, believer, are loved by Christ, you are so loved by Christ as not merely to be espoused to Him, but united to Him in eternal wedlock. You are joined to Him in such a way that you must, by and by, be with Him in all the glory of His royal estate, for the King will bring His queen home, and He will bring you home to dwell with Him for ever and ever.

I am very sorry for those who do not know anything about this great love, I am truly sorry for you outsiders.

*“His worth, if all the nations knew,
Surely the whole world would love Him too.”*

If they did but imagine the sweetness of the love of Christ, they would never give rest to their eyes until they had looked to Him by faith, and so had learned it, and known it for themselves.

III. Now lastly, dear friends, if such be the love of Jesus, and the way in which He has proved it, HOW OUGHT WE TO THINK OF IT?

I hardly need suggest to God's people anything about this, for you know it already, your own hearts have outrun my words.

How should we think of the love of Christ? Why, *with deepest gratitude*. Oh, how could You love me, my Lord, You whose eyes outshine the light of the morning? How could You love me, You who can make the fairest of all things with a wish of Your heart? How could You love me in whom there was nothing fair, nothing worthy of Your love? Yet I do bless You for it.

Do not all of you who love Him say in your hearts, "Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name, that ever he should love me"? It is not His benefits that you have to think of just now, though they are innumerable. It is not His mercies that you have to think of at this

moment, though they are immeasurable. But it is that He has loved you, and that He still loves you, and that He has given Himself to you and for you. That is the point. Do you not bless Him? Do you not feel as if you could lie at His feet, ah, and love the very dust He trod upon, when you think that ever He should love you? Very well then, return to Him your gratitude.

But that is not half enough. The next thing is, *render to Him your obedience*. Does not the Scripture say that the wife is to be obedient to her husband? Well, in this case, shall we not prove our gratitude to Christ by a complete obedience to Him? Is there anything that He commands you to do? Can you neglect it after such love as this? The least of His ordinances, will you not observe them? The smallest of His precepts, will you not regard them? Is there a word of His lips that you dare despise? Is there a wish that He has expressed in the Scriptures that you would fail to carry out? I hope not, such love as Christ has given to us ought to receive from us, without any exhortation, a complete and perfect obedience even to every jot and tittle as far as we can render it.

I do not understand that love to Christ which makes men pick and choose, and say, "I shall not attend to that, for that is non-essential. I shall do this, I believe that it is wrong, but still, I daresay it does not matter much." No, no, no! True wives act not so to their husbands, there is no wish of a loving husband which a loving wife would not regard.

Nay, more, she anticipates his wishes, she delights to make him happy, and so should it be with my heart towards my Lord. I should be looking out for what I can do for Him, I should be hunting high and low to find somewhat that would give Him pleasure, and above all, since He says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments," my heart should answer, "Thy commandments are not grievous; it is my delight to do thy will, O my God and my Saviour." That is the spirit in which to act towards Christ.

Once more. There is a text which says, "Let the wife see that she reverence her husband." I have sometimes thought that must be somewhat difficult for some wives to do. There has not been very much to reverence in their husbands, still, they are bound to do it as far as it is possible. In this case, there is everything to reverence in our Beloved, there is nothing about Him but deserves our profoundest homage. Such an one as He, whose very name has music in it, whose very person is the delight of seraphim and cherubim—He, the Christ, whom none can conceive of in all His fullness but the Father—we must reverence Him, and bow before Him, and extol Him.

I grow angry, I confess it, when I hear some men speak of Christ. They talk of my Lord in these days as if He were some common person, and they have "comparative religions" in which they compare Him with I know not whom. I love my Lord so well that I must boil over with indignation when His name is disparaged. Our hymn says—

"Stand up, stand up for Jesus."

It is almost too commonplace an expression in reference to Him, still, what it means let us do, let us be ready, like the armed men who were about the bed of Solomon, to defend our King against all comers, for if He loved us so much, we must love Him in return.

And what else shall we say? If such is the love of Christ, how shall we think of it but in a way of holiness? *Let us seek to be like Him*, let us try to fulfill His will, that He may purify us, and sanctify us by the washing of water by the Word, that we may be holy as He who has called us is holy. Let us think of this love by striving after sanctification, and let us think of this love, above all, by rendering to Him now and as long as we live, the full love of our heart.

We cannot love Him without being moved to love Him more. We can love the more by thinking much of the person towards whom our hearts are drawn, so think much of my Lord, think of Him every day. Get to be familiar with Him. Read frequently the story of His life and death. Get alone as often as you can, and picture Him before your eyes until you find your heart exclaiming, "I love Thee, dearest Lord. Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee."

I find it a profitable form of devotion, sometimes, to sit quite still, and not say a word, but just only think of Him. My heart has burned within me while doing that, and I believe that it is not lost or wasted

time, but time most profitably spent, for I come forth from my chamber and feel, "Now I am ready for the service of life, or for its suffering, for I have seen the Well-beloved, and the glances of His countenance have charmed away my griefs, and prepared me to take up my cross, and follow Him whithersoever He goeth."

Oh, love the Lord, ye His saints, and as long as you live, love Him more and more, love Him to the very utmost, till you die of love! Blessed, for ever blessed be His holy name! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

I JOHN 3

I have read this chapter many times in your hearing, but we cannot read it too often, for it is full of the deepest and most important instruction. God grant that fresh light from above may shine upon it as we listen once more to the familiar words!

Verse 1. *Behold,—*

If you never used your eyes to good purpose before, use them so now, "Behold,"—

1. *What manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God:*

Let the truth of our adoption amaze us—the adoption of such unworthy ones as we were to so high a relationship "that we should be called the sons of God."

1. *Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*

There is no need to say to whom this last sentence refers, the pronoun "Him" is quite sufficient to indicate our Lord Jesus whom the world knew not. Every living, loving heart must at once have thought of "Him" who is the chief, the firstborn, the only begotten Son of God.

2. *Beloved, now are we the sons of God,—*

It is enough to make the lame man leap as a hart to hear that blessed statement, and to know it to be true.

2. *And it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*

In proportion to our view of Christ is our likeness to Him. Those who never saw Him are not like Him at all, those who have in a measure seen Him are in a measure like Him, they who see Him as He is are like Him. There is a transforming power about the image of Christ when it is seen by the soul, "We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

3. *And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

Discouragement and despair will not purify you, doubt and darkness will only make you worse than you were before, but the indulgence of this blessed hope that you are to be like Christ will help you to purify yourself, "even as he is pure." Therefore, beloved, have hope in God. Remember that it is one of Satan's tricks and snares to try to discourage you, but it is God's will to increase your hope, for thereby you increase in purity.

4. *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.*

This is the best definition of sin that can be given, let none of us ever tolerate any other idea of sin but that it is "the transgression of the law."

5-6. *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.*

That is to say, if sin is the habitual course of our life, we do not truly know the Lord. He who walks with God endeavors with all his might to be free from sin, and he is sanctified by abiding in Christ.

7. *Little children, let no man deceive you:*

Because you are little, you are apt to be deceived. There is a great blessedness in being little children, but there is also some danger connected with such a condition, so we must beware of those who would deceive us.

7. *He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.*

The test of a man's real character must be what he does, not what he professes, not what he boasts of, but what is really the manner of his life.

8-9. *He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doeth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*

He sinneth not with any pleasure, it is not the course of his life. There are, alas! in the best of men, infirmities and imperfections and failures, would God these were all removed! Still, the man is not what he used to be, though he is not what he shall be, he is not what he once was.

10. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.*

Holiness and love are the marks of the true child of God, and where these are not to be found, a man must not bolster himself up with any notion that salvation is his, for he is no child of God.

11-12. *For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous.*

So that, when you see a man filled with hate and envy and malice, it is because his own life is not holy. There is no exception to this rule, true holiness and love always go together, where love is absent, holiness must be absent too.

13. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.*

See, Cain hated Abel and the world hates the saints. It is the very nature and spirit of the world to hate those who are not of the world.

14. *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.*

Love becomes the distinguishing mark of the new life.

14. *He that loveth not his brother abideth in death.*

No matter though he may be outwardly religious, and may think that by doing certain external actions, he will save himself, there is no truth at all in his religion, for the very essence of true religion is that a man lives not to himself, but unto God, and for the good of his fellow men.

15. *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer:*

He would get rid of that brother if he could, and he is therefore a murderer in spirit, for the essence of murder is not the dagger or the poison, but the desire to put out of existence or to do the utmost harm to the one who is hated. The essential element of murder lurks within the bosom of all hatred.

15. *And ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.*

His action is Cain-like, he is not of the chosen seed, he has not the life of God abiding in him.

16. *Hereby perceive we the love of God,—*

The master love, the chief love that was ever in this world—

16-19. *Because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and sees his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.*

That is still the test, truthful love proves that "we are of the truth," children of the God of truth, and so assures and tranquillizes our hearts before Him. Our hearts shall be calm, confident, and happy before God, when we know that true love flows within them.

20-23. *For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemns us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive*

of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

Faith works by love, we believe on the name of the Lord Jesus, God's well-beloved and only begotten Son, and that faith leads us to love all who bear His holy name.

24. *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*

If He has given us the Spirit of Christ, then Christ Himself is in us, if He has given us the Spirit of love, that also is the evidence that Christ Himself abideth in us. Oh, for more of that blessed Spirit in every one of us!

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—423, 371

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.