

THE CHRISTIAN'S SERVICE AND HONOR NO. 2651

A SERMON
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD'S DAY, DECEMBER 3, 1899
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK
ON A LORD'S-DAY EVENING, IN THE AUTUMN OF 1857

*“If any man serve me, him will my Father honor.”
John 12:26*

FEW men love service. Man prefers to be his own master, to do as he pleases, according to “his own sweet will” and like the winds, to be under no control whatever. But he who spurns the counsel of God, despises His law and tramples on His commands, commits an act of suicide to his own liberty. Those who act thus, while they seek to be free, become the veriest slaves, for when they give a loose rein to their lusts, they find them like wild horses dragging them irresistibly along. Passions indulged turn into habits, and those habits hold them fast in their iron grip and they cease to be free any longer.

He is the freeman who serves God and not the man who scorns the yoke of Jesus. He is the freeman whose shoulders bear the yoke of Christ, but he who refuses to serve Him is a slave. He who will not obey Jesus, obeys a tyrant master called Satan, or worse still, himself, for after all, the greatest tyrant to a man is his own sinful self.

There is no slavery harder to endure than the despotism of evil habits when they have grown strong upon a man and fixed their chains upon his neck. The service of Jesus is perfect liberty—those who wear the collar of Jesus find it to be a royal badge, which makes them far more honorable than would the Order of the Garter, or the Bath. There is nothing that can so exalt a man as to make him a servant of Jesus, and the man who bends his neck willingly to serve Him, manifests the greatest wisdom.

What is it to serve Jesus? The text says, “If anyone serve me, him will my Father honor.” Well, we can serve Him *in the faith that we hold, in the sufferings we endure, and very much in the acts we perform.*

First, we can serve Him *in the faith that we hold.* This is true service. I believe certain doctrines because God says they are true—and the only authority I have for their truth is the Word of God. I receive such-and-such doctrines, not because I can prove them to be compatible with reason, not because my judgment accepts them, but because God says they are true.

Now this is one of the best services we can render to God—to submit ourselves to Him in our belief of what He has revealed and ask Him to fix His truths in our hearts and make us obey them. There are some who have an idea that doctrinal belief is nothing, but I tell you again, one of the highest services we can render to God is fully to believe in the doctrines of His Word. So far from doctrinal error being a thing of no moment, it is a great sin, because the Word of God is plain, and he who does not, by searching, discover the truth, sins against God in the proportion in which he errs from His Word. But he who manfully proclaims the whole truth and he who heartily receives it, alike obey God and perform one of the highest services that can be rendered to the Most High.

Secondly, we honor Him, also, *when we suffer for His name's sake.* When with patience we bear the fires of persecution, when, with calmness and resignation, we listen to the lies and calumnies that fly abroad, when we continue in well-doing though all manner of evil is said against us on account of our devotion to Jesus, then we serve Him, and God is thereby honored and glorified. Our Lord Jesus bids us, in that day, rejoice and leap for joy, for great is our reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets who were before us.

And moreover, when our suffering does not spring from our enemies, but when God Himself lays us on the bed of affliction, we honor Him when, worn with pain and tossed from side to side, we are calm and patient under the sickness and say,

*“Father, I wait Thy daily will:
Thou shalt divide my portion still:
Grant me on earth what seems Thee best,
Till death and heaven reveal the rest.”*

The patient bearing of poverty is a service to God, the calm endurance of pain is honoring the Father, submission to His will in all the proceedings of His providence is the very essence of devotion.

Thirdly, *we can serve God in the outward acts we perform*, and that is the highest form of service. Indeed, if we do not serve God thus, we do not really serve Him at all. “If any man serve me, him will my Father honor,” says Christ. And in proportion as a Christian man serves God in his outward life and conversation, shall he receive honor of God.

There are two or three ways of doing that. Some may serve God by the performance of *ecclesiastical duties*, as they are called. Others, *by the more private duties of religion*. But others, and more frequently, *by the acts of daily life*. Those who preach the Gospel from love to God and for His glory, serve Him, and shall be honored in their labor. The deacon who toils for the church of God is serving Him, and shall be blessed in what he does. The Sunday school teacher serves God, and each of you who have been preaching in the open air, or have in smaller places of worship been testifying to the truth and now have come here to take the rest which all tired soldiers need, each of you who have been engaged in humbler work, teaching a little class, or giving away a tract, you have each and all, in some measure, served God.

But if you have not served God in this way today, you can serve God tomorrow in your shop, or in your family. The servant can honor God even when she sets the things out for the daily meal and when she clears them away. The nurse can serve God when, with tender hands, she binds up the wounds of the distressed and suffering. And the merchant, also, when he makes rectitude the law of his dealings, and afterwards, with a liberal hand, dispenses some of his goods to feed the poor.

Do not think it is necessary to be a clergyman and wear a gown in order to serve God, you may serve Him behind the counter, at the plow, or driving your horses. Whatever your hand finds to do may be done to the glory of God. Common actions reveal the essence of true piety. Those things which we call common, God does not think so. When they are done with a right motive and in a right spirit, they become as great, in God's sight, as the sermons of the minister who preaches to the largest audience.

And I take it that there will be people before the throne, who, for acts which they have done in private, will be stationed nearer to the Savior than some of those who occupied very high positions in the church. They went foremost in the day of battle and received great applause from men, yet, God knows that they were not one-half so faithful to their Savior as the poorest cottager, or the meanest peasant who, for the good of souls, and the glory of God, bent his knees before the Lord in earnest and believing supplication.

I cannot enlarge upon these points. You must think over them when you get home. You may serve God in the belief of His doctrines, in suffering the dispensations of His providence, and in obeying all His commandments, not forgetting the commandment concerning believers' baptism. Now I come to the subject of my discourse, in our Savior's declaration, “If anyone serve me, him will my Father honor,” from which I learn that *God will honor him in this world, in the future and intermediate state, at the day of judgment and throughout eternity*.

I. GOD THE FATHER WILL, EVEN IN THIS WORLD, HONOR THE MAN WHO SERVES THE SAVIOR.

Some of you look at me with astonishment and are ready to say, “That is not true. God does not, as a rule, honor His servants in this world. It is a notorious fact that those who serve God best receive the

most dishonor in this world, that those who are the most valiant for the truth are called upon to endure the largest share of ignominy. Instead of the greatest honor, they have the most of the world's hisses, derision, and scorn."

Yes, I know that "the friendship of the world is enmity with God," and that if any man will be a friend of God, he will generally be an enemy to this world. But yet, for all that, the servants of Christ do receive respect and reverence even in this time-state.

I remark, first, that *Christ's servants receive honor in the church*. Any man who serves God faithfully will be sure to be honored by the Lord's true servants. Let him preach the truth fearlessly, fully, earnestly, and heartily, and he need not be afraid that he shall not be honored by his brethren of the church, for the good will assuredly rally round him and not be backward in showing respect to him. Nor, if he toils in the Sunday school, shall he be without honor. Nor will he lack it, if he be but a humble member of the church, if he is only seeking to glorify his Lord. Just in proportion as each one serves God will he be honored.

I deny the statement which is made sometimes, that honor is not given to those members of churches who do not happen to occupy what is called a respectable position in society. I believe that if an examination were to be made into the conduct of the affairs of this church, for example, it would be proved that the greatest honor is given to those who work most for God. There are, I am sure, some of our members to whom we all look up with respect and reverence, though they are not men of position or wealth. But they have something more and something better, they have the love of God in their hearts and they manifest the effect of that love in their lives, and that makes them honorable.

And putting this church as the representative of all Christian churches in this matter, I may say that the poor man, in his efforts to do good, will be honored equally with the rich. No distinction is made by God on account of rank or estate, but each one is honored according as he loves and serves the Savior. If respect is shown to the rich as well as to the poor—and why should the poor be honored and the rich despised?—it is not because of his worldly wealth, but because he is also rich in faith. A rich man's soul is as good as the poor man's, and the poor man's soul is as good as that of the rich—and when the poor man labors for Jesus as well as the rich man, they will alike receive honor.

I believe it is so amongst us here and trust that it will continue to be so in all time to come. At any rate, as long as this arm can strike a blow against the spirit of social bigotry, it shall be driven from our midst. We do not admit any thought of caste among us and I am constrained to believe that the general practice, in all our churches, is to reverence men according to their usefulness. Do not imagine, then, that you are debarred from any position in the church, or from any of the honors of your brethren because you do not happen to be rich. The church will honor those who serve the Lord and so will God Himself, for Jesus said, "If anyone serve me, him will my Father honor."

But next, *those who serve Christ will receive honor from the world also*. The world itself honors the Christian. You say, "How can that be? I am the subject of the laugh, the jeer, and the jibe from morning to night. I am called 'a canting Methodist,' or something of that sort. And I can't think, therefore, that I am honored by the world. I feel rather that I am dishonored."

But you *are* honored, after all, though it may be you do not know it. You are honored in the consciences of those very men who thus speak ill of you. Whatever they may say, in their hearts they reverence you. They may call you ill names, but they know they do not belong to you. They may call you a dog, but they believe you an angel. They may call you black, but they believe you white.

Here is a proof of it—if they were to see you fall into sin, they would say directly, "He is one of your members." Why would they say that? Because they really expect you to be holy and consistent. And it is not till they have proof of the fact that you are not so, that they can deny the respect and honor of their own consciences. An ungodly man is not to be found whose conscience would not force him inwardly to do you honor. Even Satan himself was obliged to admit the majesty of holiness, if, as Milton tells us,

"Abash'd the devil stood,

And felt how awful goodness is."

Goodness is an awful thing to a wicked man. He sees you bear with patience what he says against you—it surprises him that you forgive injuries and it vexes his heart—but he cannot understand it. There is a power about Christianity which makes the enemy quail, and a majesty in righteousness before which he must tremble. You need not concern yourselves about taking care of your own character before the eyes of men, but you must see that it is right before the eyes of God—if you serve Him, He will honor you.

Again, *the most wicked men will honor the Christian when they come to die.* I have known some few hardened wretches, who passed out of the world as they had lived, in open rebellion against God and who to the last, therefore, despised religion. But generally, I have found that the scoffer changes his tone when death approaches. "Send for someone to visit me," is his cry then. "For whom shall we send? Shall it be John, the swearer?" "Oh, no! send for John, the praying man. I should like him to pray over me. Or send for the minister." "But why don't you ask for your old companions? You used to say that they were the jolliest fellows, they were the merriest men you ever met? You know there is no such place as heaven or hell, for you often said so when in their company. Many a glass have you quaffed with them—why not have another before you die?"

Ah! such companions as these will not do for him now. And that fact proves the honor which such a man, at last, puts upon the Christian. His language then is, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." The ungodly scorn their own comrades' society and run to our camp then. They think there is something in religion when they come to die. The voice of the last enemy speaks with a tongue of iron and a sound of thunder, and makes even the most hardened conscience honor the Christian.

Once more, *the Christian man is honored after he is dead.* If you want to be thought well of and spoken of with high honor, you must die. All of us who are alive must be slandered and criticized, but when we have been a while in our graves, it may be that we shall in our turn be the masters. Many men are stars to the world now who were but glowworms when they were alive. While playing their part among men, they were run down, scoffed at, and spoken of as everything that was bad.

But they descended to the grave, a few years passed away, and now looked at from a distance, they bear a very different aspect to the general eye. Looking upon them now is like gazing at the sun—you see their brightness far more than their spots. The world misses the Christian when he is gone. Perhaps one member of a family is godly and the rest are not, and they say, "Oh, we don't care for him, he is too religious for us!"

But they will feel a sad gap when he is gone and one which they will not be able to fill. The neighborhood, too, in which he lived, will miss him, because his words of kindness and deeds of mercy will be seen no more. They will say, "Well, after all, he was a good fellow." How often have I heard that, "Ah, well! he was not so bad, after all. There are not many left so good as he was." You don't know why this change has been wrought in people's minds, but so it often is. Death embalms the poorest believer and lays him in the sepulcher of the kings. He who was but a common Christian becomes a brilliant light when God hangs him up, like a lamp with a silver chain, to glitter from the skies.

II. GOD WILL HONOR HIM IN THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

When a Christian dies, his soul at once ascends to heaven. Not so his body—*that* continues in the grave until the resurrection morning, and sometimes, we are anxious to know what will be our lot whilst our souls are separated from our bodies. Let me say then, for a certainty, according to God's Word, that before our bodies rise, we shall be in paradise, for Jesus said to the penitent thief, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."

There is no purgatory into which souls are dragged in order to be prepared and made fit for heaven. But although they go at once to the heaven of God, and rest in His presence, it is not the full

consummation of their bliss. They will not be satisfied till they wake up in the likeness of Christ, when body and soul will be reunited.

What are the honors which the pure spirit will receive when, freed from this tabernacle of clay, it comes before its God? The Almighty will then say, "I see my son," or, "I behold my daughter. Your spirit I loved with an everlasting love. Your name I wrote in the covenant of election. I sent my Son to die for you. I called you by my grace. I led you all the desert through. I fed you by My hand. I guided you through dangers and snares into the right way and I will keep you forever. Thrice-honored servant, you have done well—enter and take your place among the spirits of the redeemed."

Angels, too, are ready to attend upon the saints. A saint in heaven will receive all the service which an angel can perform. If the archangel Michael himself could do the meanest service for a child of God, he would consider himself thrice honored. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" We cannot tell what glory the saints have, even now, while their bodies are yet in the house of death and under the cold slab, yet we know that their souls are more glorious than the angels, and more honored than the cherubim that sing incessantly before the throne of JEHOVAH.

III. If any man serves the Lord Jesus Christ, HE SHALL BE HONORED IN THE GREAT DAY OF JUDGMENT.

That day is approaching. I will not attempt to describe the scene which shall be witnessed when the heavens and the earth shall flee away, and when the quick and the dead, the righteous and the ungodly, shall stand before God. In the day of judgment, God will honor His servants from the mouths of the wicked, from the mouths of devils, from the lips of angels, and from His own lips.

At the day of judgment, *God will honor the righteous before even the wicked themselves.* You proud monarchs, who put to death the servant of God, sending him in a fiery chariot to heaven, how confounded will you be when the lowly martyr, on whom you wreaked your vengeance, shall stand before you and say, "Tyrant, I suffered for the truth's sake at your hands."

And what shall the lordly cardinal say then, and the wicked priest who put to death, when they had the power, the men who would not forsake the truth of God and do violence to their consciences, even though fire and torture had to be endured in consequence of their loyalty to their Savior? And how will the ungodly look the righteous in the face? How will the hardened sinner feel when he has to confront that man of God whom he stretched upon the rack? How will *he* tremble who was the unjust judge who signed his mittimus? The Christian will then be able to point out his persecutors and the entire universe will regard them with disdain. "That is the man," he will say, "who stretched me on the rack. That is the man who cast me into prison. Yon wretched men chained me to the stake, and that man brought forth the fire and firewood which consumed me."

But how honored is the martyr now! He is arrayed in robes more glorious, though not more white, than others can wear—garments more studded with jewels, though not more the workmanship of the Savior—and on his head is a crown heavy with brilliants. While the monarch who persecuted him and all who aided him shall be cowed into silence and shrink away in despair, calling upon the mountains and the hills to cover them.

How will the prophets be honored? I think I see Jeremiah standing before those kings who laughed at his predictions and with his fellow heroes exclaiming, in triumph, "O king, was not my prophecy fulfilled? Is not Babylon cast down? Is not Nineveh become as a heap? Where is Petra, the city of Edom? Where are the houses of Baal and the temples of the gods? Are they not fallen, fallen, fallen, even as I prophesied?" How great will be the triumphs of those grand old prophets when they stand before those who scoffed at and ridiculed them—who then shall be obliged to confess that not one of their words has failed, but that every threatening that came from the mouth of God has been fulfilled!

But I think there will also be great honor put upon the ministers of the Gospel, the men whom God has Himself chosen. The men who, by a sacred impulse within their souls, were forced to speak—not the man-made minister, made so by the imposition of the hands of the bishop, or of the presbyters—who

shall then be confronted with those who despised their message. Unto such will JEHOVAH say, in the presence of the men whom He chose to proclaim His Gospel, "Inasmuch as you scoffed at the words of these My servants, you did it unto Me. It would have been better for you that a millstone had been hanged about your neck and that you had been cast into the midst of the sea. Depart, you cursed, into everlasting fire."

And every member of Christ's church shall receive honor in that day. I am sometimes doubtful whether the sins of the elect will be read out before the world, but if so, I am certain it will not be for the purpose of casting upon them any reproach, but only to make the judgment an impartial one. But of this I am sure, that *their righteous acts will be proclaimed*. This man was called a liar and he shall be proved to be truthful. Another was styled a hypocrite, but it shall be found that he was perfectly sincere and his false accusers shall be confounded. The biographies of the saints, written with the pen of God, shall be read out from the lips of the Eternal, that the universe may confer honor upon them.

And wicked men, whatsoever you have done in darkness, shall be declared in the light. Your midnight sins shall be exposed before the sun. Your most private acts shall be exhibited to the gaze of the entire universe, and all your petty acts of cheating and fraud shall be read out to the world so that men and angels shall hear. And while you are dishonored, the righteous shall be honored, even from your lips. They shall be honored by words that shall be forced from you in that day, when God shall make His people stand forth clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners.

Again, *the saints shall be honored even from the devil himself*. Do you not know that the saints are to judge the world? Nor are they to judge only men, for the great foe of God and man, Satan himself, shall lift his brazen front, with thunder scarred, and receive his final sentence, and begin his hell anew. I think I hear God asking His saints, "Will you ratify the sentence that I have pronounced upon Satan?" I hear one loud, "Amen." proceed from the entire host of the redeemed, and I, for one, will say "Amen" with all the voice I have, in favor of his condemnation.

Full often have I fought with him and sometimes he has seemed as if about to triumph over me, and hurling his fiery darts, he has cried, "Now I will make a full end of you." But again and again have I been able to return to the attack and to exclaim, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, when I fall, I shall arise," and soon he has been once more put to flight. And I believe, in that last great day, the Lord will allow His saints to put their feet upon the neck of this Agag and I think I see the feeblest saint—Little-Faith himself—putting his feet upon the neck of the devil. And I know that if I may but once get my foot upon him, he shall not receive a heartier crush from anyone than he shall receive from me.

I owe him no thanks, I can assure you. Full often has he cast me down, but then, I will tread upon him—that will be a day of triumph, indeed, when the old dragon shall be laid prostrate, to be assaulted by every child of God, and to be the scoff and jeer of the universe. And thus,

***"The weakest saint shall win the day,
Though death and hell obstruct the way."***

So the saints shall be honored by the wicked and even by the old serpent himself. But *angels, also, will mention your names in their songs*. Angels are the poets of heaven and do you think that the heroes of earth shall have their praise sung in this world and that your deeds will not be sung in glory? In the battle odes of the angels, there are names more celebrated than Alexander, or Hannibal, or Napoleon, and peans more melodious and seraphic than were uttered in honor of the battlefields of Blenheim and Waterloo. No praise shall be so great as that which angels shall give to the saints, except that which they ascribe to the Savior.

The church of Christ shall be honored then. Many a time has she had to sit as an outcast, amid the ruins of the temple, with locks unbound and tears trickling down her cheeks, enduring the disdain of the world. With the voice of lamentation, we have heard her cry, "My Lord is gone," and we have seen her tear her garments in grief and woe.

But the heart of the church is still true to her Lord, whom, seeing not, she loves, and at times, notwithstanding her desolation, she is the possessor of joy unspeakable and full of glory. As the proud ones of the earth pass her by, they call her hypocrite and laugh at her pretensions to be the Bride of King Jesus, saying, "Her Husband has cast her off and will not acknowledge her. Is she not a woman despised?" Thus the poor church sits and exclaims, "Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow."

But in due time comes the day of judgment. Jesus steps from His throne, and like Ahasuerus of old, stretches out the scepter and says, "My queen, My spouse, touch this emblem of mercy and live." Leading her up the steps of His high throne, He places her beside Him, and shows her to the assembled universe as the Bride, the Lamb's wife. Then he will take the crown of universal sovereignty and will place it upon His own head, none other being worthy of the honor, while another regal diadem shall be placed by Him on the head of His elect queen.

Then, turning to the church, He will say, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." Her mourning shall then be turned into singing and she shall be clothed with the garments of praise, instead of the spirit of heaviness—while all her enemies shall be covered with confusion of face and be ashamed.

IV. Lastly, GOD WILL HONOR THE RIGHTEOUS THROUGHOUT ETERNITY.

The honors of the godly are not fleeting things—not the gewgaws of an hour that shall pass away. Last Thursday, when I was at Windsor Castle, I saw a man who was painting up the escutcheon of the last new-made knight, to be added to a long series of similar emblems, which had their places in the hall. I said to him, "Are the escutcheons of all the knights here?" And I think he replied that they could be traced back to the very origin of the order.

I thought to myself, "A fine honor this, to have conferred upon one a few stripes and stars, representations of rampant lions, griffins, tigers with two heads, and such like! Wonderfully glorious these things make a man, to be sure!" A little paint can make it all, and the painter's brush can efface it. Yet there are men who will face death upon the battlefield to be honored thus, or to have their image cut in stone and placed upon a pedestal for men to gaze at. Wonderful glory is it not for a man to die for? It is such an honor, I imagine, as very few of us would care for, for this sort of glory will pass away.

But the honor which the Christian shall receive will never fade. When a million years shall have elapsed, it shall be as fresh as ever, for Christ's promise shall always stand "If any man serve me, him *will* my Father honor." Christian, the hour of your honor is coming, when your name shall be pronounced by the great Judge and Arbiter of all, and you shall be owned by Him as one amongst the followers of the Lamb. You shall receive more enduring honors than the men of this world can bestow. You may not receive the reward of an earthly coronet, but you shall be a priest and a king unto God, and shall reign with Christ forever and ever.

Blush not, Christian, to look the whole world in the face, for in God's sight you are a king. Walk, therefore, with humility before God, and wait patiently till the Master shall remove you to your kingdom—there you shall be clothed with glory and become the possessor of everything which the heart can wish—honor, wealth, happiness, dignity, and joy unspeakable shall be yours, and that forever. "If any man serve me, him will my Father honor."

Now, what shall I say, in conclusion, to those who do not serve God? Well, I have but little to say to you tonight. I have often found that when preaching on these subjects, I have said little to sinners. God has said a great deal more to them than I have, for all that has been spoken respecting the bliss of the righteous has set them wishing it were their lot. It is not infrequently the case that sermons which seem to be more especially adapted to comfort saints, prove especially powerful to the conversion of sinners, because they have been led to say to themselves, "All these promises are not intended for us."

Let me ask you, then, my brother and my sister, if this is the case at present with you—when will you appropriate these things to yourself? I have told you that the righteous shall be honored. Now, what were the righteous more than you are? You are ungodly, but the righteous would have continued the

same had not divine grace interposed and made them new creatures in Christ Jesus. You are a great sinner, but such were some of us. Whatever may have been the form of your iniquity, there are those now among the family of God who were as bad as yourselves.

I will ask you a question. Can you find, anywhere in the Bible, the declaration that you cannot be saved? Is it anywhere stated that it is possible for the man who comes to Jesus Christ to be lost? If you find that, then you may despair, but till then, you never need do so. But perhaps you say, "I know not how to come to Christ aright." I will tell you—*coming to Christ at all is coming aright*, for He has said, "Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out." It matters not whether a man comes running, limping, or creeping—so long as he gets to Christ, he has come the right way. You must not say, "I am too bad to be saved." Recollect that, in the hymn we sang just now, we are taught that nothing so much grieves the heart of Jesus—

*“As that unkind, injurious thought,
That He’s unwilling to forgive.”*

I do think, poor sinner, He would forgive you anything sooner than this wicked unbelief. If Christ were once more upon this earth and could suffer again in the flesh as He did eighteen hundred years ago, I believe that you might spit upon Him, buffet Him, and crucify Him again, and yet not see a single frown upon His face. But when you stand up and say, "I do not believe that Christ has love enough to forgive me, I do not think He is willing to pardon my sins," I see the heart of the blessed Lord almost broken by such cruel words.

"What, poor sinner," Christ might well exclaim, "have I not love enough to remove your guilt when I purchased you with my blood? Look at my hands and my feet, and see the wounds which were inflicted for you." I think I see Him looking you in the face and saying, in words of the utmost tenderness and compassion, "Poor soul, speak not so, nothing grieves my heart like that—not to be trusted by one I love is the most harrowing thing I can experience. I could almost as soon drink some drops of the cup of bitterness which I tasted in the garden, as to hear you say that I cannot forgive you. I *can*, I WILL, I DO. This very hour I say unto you, 'I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for mine own sake.'" Recollect that, sinner—not for *your* sake, not to glorify you, but to honor Himself—"and will not remember your sins." Take heart, therefore, poor soul. If you will go to Him, there is grace for you, and you shall be saved. But know, you Pharisees, that He came not to call the righteous. Sinners, only, Jesus came to save.

And now, saints of God, let me urge you to despise the scorn and the contempt of men. Think of the glories you shall soon inherit, and the honors that your soul and body shall receive at the judgment day. By filling our minds with thoughts of the glories of heaven, the Word of God, the blessings that are eternal and full of glory, the love of Jesus, and the mercies of JEHOVAH, we shall be graciously strengthened and enabled to conquer in the fight and keep the road to heaven.

In the strength of the Lord we cry, "*Nil desperandum.*" We still believe that Christ is our shield, and Christ our sun, and doubt not that we shall hear it said at the last, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

JOHN 15:9-27

This chapter contains some of the choicest of the utterances of the Lord Jesus to His disciples. On His way from the upper room in Jerusalem, where He had instituted the supper, to the garden of Gethsemane, where He was about to be betrayed, He spoke these wondrous words of cheer and counsel.

He had been speaking to His followers concerning fruit-bearing. Now He turns to another subject.

Verse 9. *As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.*

Oh, what love for Christ's disciples to continue in—a love which finds no parallel except the love of the Father to His well-beloved Son, a love, therefore, without beginning, without end, without measure, without limit, without change! Oh, to be fully possessed by this love! I will read this verse again. It is such a sweet silver bell that we cannot hear it ring too often. "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love." That is, live in it, abide in it, make it your home and your continual dwelling place.

10. *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love;*

Obedience will enable you to live in this love as the fish lives in the sea. You shall always enjoy it if, by grace, you are enabled always to be obedient to your Lord's commands.

10-12. *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. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.*

Oh, you who profess to be the disciples of Christ, take heed to this new commandment which He has given and do not violate it. Let your very nature be love. Let your very spirit be love and then let your whole life be transmuted into the pure gold of love.

13-14. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*

Obedience to Christ's commands leads us into the banqueting house of friendship. We never understand how friendly Christ is to us, nor do we become His familiar companions until we are obedient to Him.

15. *Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth:*

Things that he is told to do are not explained to him. It is enough for him to obey the orders that are given to him by his master.

15. *But I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.*

Christ has unbosomed Himself to His own chosen ones. There are no secrets which we would keep from Him, or which He keeps from us. Oh, what hallowed communion! This blessed result comes of obedience to our Lord. May God enable us richly to enjoy it!

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

God's servants are all ordained. I sometimes hear remarks which remind me that there still lingers among us the superstition about ordained ministers. There is no ordination of a minister except the descent of the Spirit of God upon him, and the choice of the church which calls him to his special sphere of work. All the saints are partakers of the divine ordination—they are all ordained to minister before the Lord.

"I have chosen you, and ordained you." For what purpose? "That ye should go and bring forth fruit." Oh, that we may prove the reality of our ordination to this blessed work by bringing forth fruit—fruit that shall remain!

17-27. *These things I command you, that ye love one another. If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. 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. 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: but now they have no cloke for their sin. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. 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 shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

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