

LOVE AND JEALOUSY

NO. 3516

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY JUNE 15, 1916
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON

*“Love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave.”
Song of Solomon 8:6*

TAKEN in its most natural sense, this is certainly true of creature love. It is a mighty, all-constraining, irresistible passion. Even the love of friendship has proved itself occasionally to be “strong as death.” “Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend.” There have been those who were willing to sacrifice their lives for their friends. Filial affection has sometimes proved to be more than a match for the terrors of the grave. Some pleasing instances are on record worthy to be written among the golden deeds of manhood, in which brothers and sisters have seemed to contend with each other which should die first, if perchance a brother’s precious life might by such a sacrifice be preserved.

What a mighty instinct of love glows in the mother’s heart! You recollect that famous story of the mother whose child was taken from her by a Jesuit missionary to be trained separate and apart from its parents, how she swam through rivers, and passed through what seemed to be impenetrable forests, guided only by the midnight star, till she arrived at the place where her offspring was—braving death in a thousand shapes, from wild beasts and venomous serpents, from floods and jungles, from fierce men and relentless persecutors, might she but reach her child.

Have there not been instances where, in the stormy blasts of winter, a mother has wrapped her garments about her infant, and exposing herself to the fury of the elements, has sacrificed her own life that the little one might live? Love has indeed often proved itself to be strong as death. When merely the common passion which burns in the breast of ordinary men and women towards each other, it has asserted its strength in a fond devotion which reckoned no consequences, spared itself no pain, and fixed no limit to endurance, not counting life itself too dear to be parted with on so high a service.

Nor do we lack painful proofs of the converse proposition as it is stated in the second clause of our text. Jealousy has often proved itself “cruel as the grave.” You have only to recall the most appalling murders that have been committed within your memory, or if you please, those you have read of in the history of nations, and you will find that jealousy has instigated those that were most vindictive and relentless.

When jealousy begins to turn its sharp tooth upon a man’s heart, his reason fails him. Madness takes possession of his faculties. A determined purpose, which he would not have dared to contemplate under the influence of a well-balanced judgment, prompts, plans, and performs, almost without premeditation, an atrocious crime, when jealousy rules the cruel hour. We believe it, and we deplore it, no revenge has ever been found too bitter, too malicious, too lawless for jealousy to inflict. Relentless as the grave, it spares not youth nor beauty, respects not fame nor fortune, but accounts all comers for its prey.

Not that these things, a phenomena of nature, much concern the Christian minister. He has to handle these themes because they concern you as men. It is to men he speaks. He has to tell them of the salvation of Jesus Christ. It is rather the business of the mental philosopher than the faithful evangelist to take up these phenomena of the human mind. Our business is to understand these things spiritually.

This Song of Songs is spiritual, or else it has no claim on our attention, its very inspiration were incredible. We cannot imagine the Holy Spirit giving us this song merely for the purpose of entertaining us with the figures and metaphors of eastern allegory. There must be a deep and hidden meaning in it.

Now we believe it will be fair to say that there are two high spiritual forms of love and jealousy, and that our text is lucid in its description of both—first, *the love and jealousy of the saints with regard to Christ*, and secondly, *the love and jealousy of Christ with regard to His saints*. We will begin with—

I. THE LOVE AND JEALOUSY OF THE SAINTS WITH REGARD TO CHRIST.

The saints love their Lord and Master, or else they could not be saints. Love is the fountain of their saintship. They are sanctified by love. It is the love of Jesus Christ which compels them to hate sin, and which leads them forward in the path of holiness. The Holy Ghost uses the same passion of love to work in us the purging of ourselves from every unhallowed thing, and to inflame our desire after everything that is agreeable to the mind of Christ. The saints have received, by the Holy Spirit, a love to Christ which is “*strong as death*.”

And how strong is death? Think for a moment how strong death is! He is so strong that the armies which lay encamped upon the field just now, and could tread an empire beneath their feet, yield to his imperial sway, and are themselves trodden beneath the feet of death. Xerxes, as he sat on his golden throne, wept at the thought that death should so soon mow down the myriads of his Persian hosts. Over all the multitudes which have been born into the world, with but two exceptions, death has swayed his scepter. So strong is he, that he has hitherto reigned as a Universal Monarch. Nor will he ever resign his scepter until He shall come whose kingdom shall have no end—He who is “*death of death, and hell’s destruction*.”

The monarchy of death is not only universal, but its behests are imperious, and instantaneously obeyed. When, at God’s command, death seizes the body, it has no power to resist. The vital energy at once ceases, the tongue of music is dumb, and the hand of skill is motionless forever. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God, who gave it.

In vain the physician’s skill, it cannot avert the stroke of death. No long siege is necessary, it requires not years, nor months, nor weeks to scale the ramparts of man’s citadel of bodily strength. As death knocks at the door it flies open. The arrest must be made. Willing or unwilling, the prisoner must go with the officer. The demand is peremptory, and the obedience passive. Seems it not as if nature had no parallel for this strong irresistible force of death?

Behold the love of our Lord Jesus Christ! Mark you, it is as strong as death! It can, and it does, overcome all adversaries, yea, even death itself! My brethren and sisters, it may, perhaps, strengthen your courage if I remind you that *some of your comrades have tried their love in competition with death*. They have “*resisted unto blood, striving against sin*.” They have met with death in the most cruel forms. They were stoned, they were sawn in sunder, they were burned at the stake, they were dragged at the heels of wild horses. Think of Marcus of Arethusa, stung to death by wasps, or of holy Mr. Samuel, starved to death in his dungeon, with but a mouthful of bread and a drop of water given him each day, only just enough to continue his lingering existence!

And yet these persons who thus met death, with no downy pillow to lean their head upon, and with no voice of friendship to comfort them, never wavered in their attachment to their Master. They suffered persecution, and nakedness, and peril, and the sword, but nothing could separate them from the love of God, which was in Christ Jesus the Lord.

Some of them met with death in *the most gloomy forms*, as well as in the most cruel shapes. They were cast into lonely dungeons where it was almost literally true that “*the moss grew upon their eyelids*.” Think of our brethren in Holland, persecuted alike by Protestants and Romanists! They have been despised of all men, and have suffered death in deep desertion. They have been thrown into dungeons, and left there till the slimy snails crawled over them, till the toads gathered about them, till their emaciated frames absolutely rotted and decayed in the nauseous places of their confinement!

Not that they desired to escape, or sought liberty at the expense of conscience, rather did they account it a joy that they had fallen into divers trials for the sake of Christ. With none to cheer them, with no brother’s voice to help them to raise a tune, with no hymn to chant them on their way to public

martyrdom, without an eye to look upon them, except the eyes of the Master, their love verily proved itself to have been “strong as death.”

Still worse, I think, to bear, some of them met death in *the most lingering manner*. Many a man could stand upon the burning kindling, endure with heroism his hour of torture, and then ascend in the chariot of Elias up to heaven, but to be roasted before a slow fire, to be starved by a low regimen, to be enervated by a vicious atmosphere, for the martyrdom to extend over a week, a month, or a year—how shall this be endured?

The supernatural grace of God has made a bed of spikes to be a bed of roses to some of the martyrs. Amidst the flames they have even leaped and sung for very joy. That was a grand saying of one of the martyrs of Mary’s age, who, when he was told by Bonner that his life would be spared if he would recant, said, “Look you here, Bishop, if I had as many lives as I have hairs on my body, I would burn as many times as that before I would bend myself down before the superstitions of Rome!”

Another of the martyrs, when his finger was put into the flame of a candle that he might feel what kind of peril he was about to encounter, told his persecutors if he had as much agony in all his body as he then had in his finger, he would not give up the faith which he had received from God, to adopt any of the traditions of men.

Death has thus come piecemeal to a man, he has had to “die daily,” “in deaths oft,” like the apostle Paul, continually having to face the grim fiend. The love which Jesus Christ has kindled in the souls of His people has been undiminished in quantity and undimmed in brightness. In fact, I think that the love which Christians have for Christ seems to flame the more vehemently the more troubles that they have to endure.

Have you never seen a chemist, when illustrating a lecture, take a small piece of solid matter, put it on some water, and the moment it touches the water it has begun to burn? In ordinary cases, contact with water extinguishes fire, but this substance touches the water and burns there, as it burns nowhere else. So seems it to be with the Christian. The best and most brilliant part of the Christian’s love comes out under some overwhelming trouble. He triumphed when the opportunity arose that put him to the test. “Love is strong as death.”

Although you and I are not born in an age in which we are likely to attain to the distinguished honor of wearing the ruby crown of martyrdom, their example may excite our emulation. Have you, dear young friend, been subjected to a little jeering and sneering in the workshop, or to a little harsh treatment at home? Maybe you have begun to falter and flag. Bethink yourself then. What part have you in that love which is strong as death if it cannot bear this?

If any of you have been sorely tempted to do an unholy thing to get out of your pecuniary embarrassments, ask yourselves, where is the love which is strong in death, and will you dare to stoop? If you do not maintain your integrity, you have not a drop of martyr’s blood in you, and if you have not the Spirit of Christ, you are none of His.

When I see professors turn pale at a laugh of the thoughtless, or look terrified when some article in a newspaper or a magazine thrusts hard at their principles, I wonder how they would have behaved themselves in the grand old times of Luther, or had they belonged to the school of which Calvin was the great exponent, or might it have been their hap to encounter the struggles, political and social, with which such bold reformers as Wickliffe and Hugh Latimer were mixed up. Let not worthy sons of valiant sires pander to craven fears. Rather let that love which is as strong as death brace your nerves and replenish you with a divine inspiration.

Doubtless, brethren, we shall have an opportunity of testing this love, though not at the ignominious stake perhaps, nor yet in the desolate prison. The average trials and troubles of life, the peculiar contingencies of each individual’s career, the special besetments and temptations that pertain to a child of God—all these make it momentous to live, to live as becomes godliness. And what think you? Can it be child’s play to die? To finish one’s course, to know that alterations and corrections cannot be made. Our flesh creeps at the prospect of the grave, but our soul trembles at the outlook and the judgment.

Our faith must be firm and our fellowship unwavering, then our love will be tenacious, yea, as strong as death. You should not lose your confidence when you lose your health. The animal spirits may sink, but you are not dependent upon aught so contingent as they are on the atmosphere. The spirit that sustains you is divine. With decay comes depression, they are both the fruit of disease or of infirmity. Faith can survive—love can triumph over both.

*“Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are;
While on His breast you lean your head,
And breathe your life out softly there.”*

This is what Christ can do. Do you ask what He will do? If you live to His praise, and rest in His love, you shall find that that love is strong as death. Instead of its growing cooler and weaker when the outward man decays, that love of yours shall get to the land of Beulah, and you shall sit upon the banks of Jordan, expecting the coming of the Master, and singing happy canticles and blessed love songs, even in the prospect of your departure. Love is strong as death.

I wish every Christian would think it over in his own mind, whether his love to Christ is not very poor and flat, compared with what it should be? It seems to me that there is a notion abroad that a Christian may be expected to betray weakness on other points. Is it not a fact that evangelical or orthodox books are far the most part written in a feeble style? How many devout ministers preach sound Gospel like simple twaddle! If you want strong common sense, you often get more of it in secular than in religious periodicals. The ready pen and the forcible tongue are frequently employed on the wrong side.

I think the idea prevails among pious people that everything we do for Christ ought to be done in a quiet, gentle, soft, milk-sop fashion—that we must pray in a very smooth tone of voice, speak in a whisper, and sing so as not to shock anybody’s nerves! This seems to me to be totally inconsistent and utterly alien to the spirit of genuine Christianity. When you espouse godliness you need not renounce manliness. If anything be fitted to develop all the energies of a man’s nature, and call forth all the powers and faculties of his being, it should be his enlisting on the side of King Jesus.

My Master calls you to serve Him, not with a timid, vacillating, fitful service, but He demands that you be bold and brave, valiant and venturesome in His service. He provides you with strength, He may well require your diligence. ’Tis meet that you serve Him with all your powers of body, soul, and spirit. The love we bear to Christ should not be a mere complacency, bland and gentle, a matter for well-bred reticence, rather than for blind avowal. No, let it be a mighty, all-constraining passion, that gets hold of a man like a whirlwind, and carries him along.

Ah! I think this love of Jesus should be dearer to the heart than light to the eyes, it should throb with every pulse of life, it should warm one’s blood as it circulates through the veins, it should inflame the heart with zeal and mold the constitution of one’s soul. The cold, phlegmatic man, or the supine, lukewarm man, are alike unfit to engage in our Master’s service. Should not the love of disciples to their Lord be stronger than the love of the husband to his wife, of the mother to her child, or of friend to friend, a love compared with which there is no love on earth to be found, a love that is strong as death? Connected with this love, and as a result of it, jealousy is brought under our notice.

“Jealousy is cruel as the grave.” *Whenever love absorbs the heart, jealousy will guard the object of affection.* Only let a provocation occur, something of jealousy is sure to appear. Your love to Christ especially lacks the genuine stamp if it is never awakened to jealousy by the malice of foes and the faithlessness of professed friends of our Lord.

Many Christians nowadays have a kind of love which is too fond of ease and too full of compromise to kindle any jealousy in their breasts. The saints of olden times, how sensitive they were, how quickly

their hot indignation was kindled. When Baal, the abomination of Moab, was worshipped in Israel, Moses said to the judges, "Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal Peor."

So, too, at the time that the golden calf was made in the wilderness, you will remember that Moses' anger waxed hot, and he stood in the gate of the camp and said, "Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me," and all the sons of Levi gathered themselves unto him. At his bidding, by the word of the Lord, they took every man his sword, and went in and out from gate to gate to slay every man, his brother, his companion, and his neighbor. There fell of the people that day about three thousand men. Their love to JEHOVAH gave them a jealousy which was cruel as the grave in avenging idolatry.

You remember how it was accounted to Phineas, the son of Eleazar, for righteousness, that he rose against Zimri, a prince among the Simeonites, and thrust him through with a javelin when he was caught in sin with a Midianitish woman. Such jealousy was cruel as the grave.

Men like Elijah did not say, in gentle accents, "Comprehensive charity is better than covenant truth. Give us full liberty to worship JEHOVAH, and you shall have perfect liberty to worship Baal." No! He contested the question with the idolatrous priests. The verdict came by fire from heaven. The frightened multitude saw it, and cried out, "JEHOVAH, he is the God." Then said Elijah, "Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape." This was the voice of a man who loved the Lord, who was jealous for His name, and these excited in him a holy anger and a righteous enmity against the worshippers of idols.

Now, under the Christian dispensation, we can have no such anger against individuals. Our Lord has taught us, by His example, that they are rather to be pitied than hated by us. But on the other hand, in zeal for the Lord of hosts, and in hatred of every false way, a Christian, walking in the light of the Gospel, should excel the most devout Jew under the old dispensation. Persecution is unprincipled. It violates the law of love, to which we owe a supreme allegiance.

But true faith never can hold fellowship with infidelity. Vital godliness must be at hostility with all unrighteousness of men. Do we seem to speak bitterly? I suppose it never will be a very sweet thing to tell people of their faults. We should like to know whether Luther did not speak bitterly. What kind of honey did he use? Did Calvin declaim in soft and silvery tone? Did Hugh Latimer, when he encountered Popery, line his mouth with velvet, and deliver himself in delicate phrases?

What think you, men and brethren? Did ever patriot stand upon maudlin civilities when he saw conspirators plotting against his country? Did any noble-minded philanthropist cringe with misgivings, or apologize for interfering with the miscreant libertines who defile the youth and beauty, or debauch the homes of the people? And can it be possible that any lover of God, and valiant defender of the faith ever did, or ever shall, truckle to those damnable heresies which are alike insulting to the Lord, who bought us, and destructive to the souls of men whose redemption is inestimably precious in His sight? Nay, but they only cared to clear themselves of the blood of souls against the last great day.

What I long to see in every church is not a breach of charity between man and man, but the utter destruction of that "pseudo charity" which is now the curse of the Christian church. If you have a partiality towards what Christ hates, pity for Agag, whom God abhors, a wish to tolerate that which exalts human pride, though it be utterly derogatory to your Master, truly then you are a traitor, however unintentionally, to your Master. You do not show any wise and discriminating love to Him, for if your love were vehement, you would be jealous of His crown jewels, and you would not suffer any other to be recognized as the head of the church but your Lord.

If you love Him, you will be jealous of His atonement, and you will not allow that anything else can cleanse from sin but that blood He shed for our remission. If you love Him, you will become jealous of His Spirit, and you will not be willing that the new birth which comes of His operations should be set down to any mere ceremony. If you love Jesus Christ, you will be jealous of His Deity, and you will not be party to bits of bread and drops of wine being adored as the body and blood of Christ, when you know that He is in the body up above, dwelling before the eternal throne.

You will feel that error, instead of being stared at as an object of scientific interest, is a thing to be shuddered at as a malignant disease, and to be guarded against as an epidemic. With Jezebel, you can

have no peace while she loves her vicious unions. You will contend against every faction which conspires to tarnish the Redeemer's glory and cast Him down from His excellence.

"Jealousy is cruel as the grave." "Hard" is the word. "Jealousy is hard as the grave." Truly the grave is hard. It has not the slightest compunction. It holds fast the prey that is taken by its master. As Christians we are, and we must be, lovers of mankind. Men we love, men we would at all times help and serve. No clime nor caste, no geographical line or national character, can define the boundary of our heart's yearning for the welfare of humanity, while we act on the commission to preach the Gospel to every creature.

But error we must scout, and cry out against it, and rest not day nor night till the arm of God has torn it up root and branch. This seems to me to be a natural consequence of loving Christ much. If you love Christ but little, you will hate error but little. If you do not love the truth at all, you will not hate error at all. You will say, "Oh! what matters it? It is a mere theologian's dispute, let it be left to the schools to wrangle over." Not so, when you once begin to think, "Such and such a truth is precious to me as my life, it is identified with my being and my well-being" From that very moment you will be filled with a jealousy which is hard as the grave. Turning now from our love and jealousy for our Savior, let us speak a little of—

II. THE SAVIOR'S LOVE AND JEALOUSY TOWARDS US.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, we know, has a love for us that passes all understanding, and however it may seem to grate upon the ear, it is equally true that He has a jealousy over His people, which watches them with incessant care. I need not prove to you that the love of Jesus Christ for us is as strong as death, He verified that when He tasted death in all its bitterness—forsaken, not only by men, but worst of all, forsaken by His God. "*Eli, Eli, lama, sabachthani,*" was the concentration of all griefs. Such was His cry upon the accursed tree.

Death never made Him flinch. He faced and felt its agonies extremely, and loved us then as He loved us before, and as He loves us still with infinite tenacity. The fact that His love is strong as death admits of no question. But here is the point I am coming to, His jealousy is cruel, or hard as the grave. He is never cruel towards His people, but He is very hard on foe or rival that would come between His people and Himself—ay, hard as the grave.

Consider this, my beloved friends. You and I once cherished a self-righteousness that stood in the way of our receiving Christ. We would not look to Him, nor trust Him, but we loved our own works. We thought ourselves at least as good as others, and we rested there.

Now how relentless the Lord was in cutting down that self-righteousness of ours! He never gave it any quarter. How He denounced it, doomed it and utterly destroyed it. We thought so much of it that we would have harbored it, but He would not tolerate a vestige of it. He turned our beauty into ashes, and our glory into confusion of face, for He loathed our self-righteousness more than we ever loathed our uncleanness and impiety. He accounted it neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill.

How He dealt with us in severity then! What cuts and wounds we had! We were killed, some of us, by His law. We cried out of the depths to Him, but still He apparently had no pity and no mercy apparently. We seemed to sink deeper and deeper into the mire, till, as we read the Book of Job, and the Lamentations of Jeremiah, we felt that the expressions we found there had been written on purpose for us.

We tried to pray, but our prayers came back from the brazen sky reverberating in our ears in notes of despair. We went to the house of God, but we found no comfort there. We turned to the Bible, but not a promise cheered us, for the Lord Jesus was jealous of our self-righteousness, and He would not give us a comfortable word, nor so much as one kind look till that self-righteousness was wholly gone. When that was turned out of us, oh! the love passages, the blessed revelations of His divine grace that He then gave us! But He would not give us so much as a glance of kindness, or a sentence of cheer, until first He had got rid of the unholy things that provoked His jealousy.

Since then we have had many visits from Him, yet He has not ceased to be jealous. I have held interviews today with a goodly number of those who have lately found Christ, and I observed among them many who were brought to seek His face by the death of a husband, or a child, and in some cases it was not only the loss of one child, but of another and another.

I have frequently met with instances where a woman has been bereaved both of her child and of her husband before she yielded up her heart to Jesus. He has had to be “cruel as the grave” before He got rid of the object of His jealousy. She was wrapped up in the affections of earth, she had given herself up wholly to earthly things, and so one gourd must wither, and then another, till there was nothing earthly left to shelter her, and then the poor weeping eye was turned to the cross, and only then consolation came.

Christ’s jealousy is thus “cruel,” but oh! what a blessed cruelty it is! It is better to enter into life halt and maimed, and having only one hand, than having two eyes and all our friends and kinsfolk about us, to be cast into hell-fire. It is better that we should suffer from cruel providences here than that we should be permitted to go wafting along streams of pleasure down to the gulf of everlasting ruin. Blessed cruelty! that makes us love the Savior by revealing the Savior’s inextinguishable love for us.

And since the day of our conversion how many times have you and I cherished tastes and habits which we preferred before Christ, and the walk of faith with Him! It is so easy to let the creature come in, and usurp the place of the Beloved—thus to live half for God and half for our friends. But that will not do, for God will have us all love and serve Him with all our heart, and soul, and strength. Our dearest friends, the partners of our every joy and sorrow, every hope and fear of our mortal lives, if they take away our hearts from Christ, will either prove a bane to us, or else they will be taken away from us.

I recollect the story of a Christian woman who had made a great idol of her child. He was her only son, and she lost him. Nothing then could console her, till at length one day she went into a Quakers’ meeting. She sat there a long time, and not a word was spoken. Presently one of the members rose up and simply said, “Verily I perceive thy children are idols.” Not another word was uttered during the whole of the meeting. That word, however, was sent by the providence of God, and fastened like a nail in a right place. It had done its work, the mother’s heart was comforted, she saw the reason of her loss, and submitted her soul to the discipline.

Now it is not children only of which we make idols. There are twenty other things. Twenty, did I say? Why, the world swarms with idols! Man is such an idolater that, if he cannot idolize anything else, he will idolize himself, and set himself up, and bow down and worship himself. But the Lord Jesus will never tolerate idolatry in any heart which belongs to Him. If He did not love you, you might do as you liked, but if He loves you, and has chosen you, and your heart then goes after idols, He will chasten you, vindicating His affection, as well as His authority, by the rod.

What would it matter to me what your children did, in comparison with the responsibility I feel for my own? Whatever mischief they might do in the street, I might not feel called upon to interfere. You and I alike feel that we are each accountable to punish our own children when they are refractory. And so is it with God. If you were not His children you might live as you list, and enjoy a measure of immunity for a while. But if you are His people, you are not your own masters, and you will have a cross, if not a curse, come into your house. The spell of the idol will spoil your blessing. “Jealousy is cruel as the grave.”

Yet, let me say it again, this is blessed cruelty. We are very apt to think that a surgeon must have a hard heart and a cruel nature when we take a shallow view of the operations he performs, and the nerve with which he performs them. A better judgment might convince you that the surgeon’s knife is dictated by necessity, wielded with skill, careful to spare pain, and designed to restore health.

“Oh!” you say, “only amputation will save his life, my child’s leg must be taken off, it festers, it mortifies, I could not touch it, I could not do it, it cannot be done,” and when you hear that the surgeon has cut through the flesh and the bone, you are apt to think, “What a cold heart he must have!” Ah! but which is the more profitable, that love of yours that would let the child die rather than do violence to its

feeling, or that which would cut off its leg, in spite of all entreaties, to save its life? Oh! thank God for the surgeon, his deep incisions are tender mercies, his misgiving would be our undoing. And has not our God thus to deal with us when He takes those things from us which tend to be fatal issues, and might otherwise prove our destruction?

A fable has been sometimes told of a little plant which grew under a big tree, and was thereby shielded from the storm, and kept tranquil and happy. The little plant prayed that it might grow into a tree, and its prayer was heard. The woodman came along and cut down the tree. Then the poor plant was exposed to the shower, and the wind, and the snow, and the frost, and it said, "Alas! for me. I am left in a pitiful condition!" But the angel of the tree told it that was the only way by which it could ever grow into a tree.

So, dear friends, when you lost your property, when the bank broke, when you lost your friend, when your mother died, when you lost, perhaps, your reputation through a slander which was abroad, it was only the taking down of the tree that the plant might grow, which could not have grown else. The discipline of nature is harsh and cruel, you may think. Ah! well, the Lord lets you think as you like, and misjudge Him if you please, for He knows that time will soon correct your judgment, and then you will think very differently as you see the end from the beginning. You will judge more wisely now when your faith is brought into active exercise. You yourself will then begin to abhor idolatry as Christ does, and you will marvel as much with thankfulness as thoughtfulness that it is taken away.

I have been reminded by this of what Rutherford said to Lady Erskine when she had lost her husband. "Well, your ladyship," he said, "the Lord Jesus Christ sets great store by your love, for it is clear that He will have it all, He has taken away those who might have had a part of it, and He has said, 'I will have it all! I have bought it, and I will have it.'" Perhaps the Master has been doing the same, or will do the same, with some of us, so that He may get all our hearts to Himself.

Now for our practical conclusion. *Let our jealousy towards Christ now be cruel as the grave.* Is there anything which keeps our heart from perfectly loving Christ? Let us have done with it at once. Have you got into any habit which keeps you from living near to Jesus? Is there any favorite sin which mars your communion with Him? Have you any little practice which, in itself, may be excusable, but which, in its tendency, may be injurious? Give it all up. He who is poor for Christ's sake is richer than the richest of men, and he who gives up a pleasure for the sake of Christ has more enjoyment in so doing than he would ever have had in the pleasure itself.

It may be that you have been for some time trifling with a conviction which you would have embraced as a truth, only it would have involved a sacrifice, therefore, you have halted and wittingly overlooked it. I know there are very many Christians just now who are in a position which they cannot justify, but they say they cannot see their way out of it. They apologize for themselves with questionings like these, "How am I to get right? What shall I do?"

Now, dear friends, ask yourselves, Does not the Lord Jesus Christ deserve to have from you simple, absolute, unhesitating obedience? "Yes," say you. Then yield it to Him, and ask grace, that from this day forth you may look with holy jealousy upon the most pleasant things that in any form or disguise come between you and your Lord and Master. Oh! what a happy life! what a blessed life you would lead! Yours will be a path of separation! You may have to journey over a rough road. Nevertheless, let your love be strong as death, and your jealousy cruel as the grave, and you will enjoy a communion with Christ dearer than life, and a Sabbath of peace that is like the days of heaven upon earth.

Well, my dear hearers, there are some of you who have no part nor lot in the inheritance that we esteem beyond all other possessions. May God give you a share in it. Oh! if you have no love to Christ in this life, what can there be for you in the next but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation? But trust in Jesus, trust in Jesus, and you shall be saved. Being saved, you shall love Him, and loving Him, you shall be jealous of everything that comes in the way to divide you from Him. You shall be with Him at last in the land where doubts and fears can never enter, and where jealousy can no longer intrude. Thus ye shall be forever with the Lord. Amen.

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