

LOVEST THOU ME?

NO. 117

A SERMON

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AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

“Jesus said to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He said unto him, Yea, Lord; you know that I love you. He said unto him, Feed my lambs. He said to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He said unto him, Yea, Lord; you know that I love you. He said unto him, Feed my sheep. He said unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you. Jesus said unto him, Feed my sheep.”
John 21:15-17.

HOW very much like to Christ before His crucifixion was Christ after His resurrection! Although He had lain in the grave, and descended into the regions of the dead, and had retraced his steps to the land of the living, yet how marvelously similar He was in His manners and how unchanged in His disposition. His passion, His death, and His resurrection, could not alter His character as a man any more than they could affect His attributes as God. He is Jesus forever the same. And when He appeared again to His disciples, He had cast aside none of His kind manners, He had not lost a particle of interest in their welfare, He addressed them just as tenderly as before, and called them His children and His friends. Concerning their temporal condition He was mindful, for He said, “Children, have you any meat?” And He was certainly quite as watchful over their spiritual state, for after He had supplied their bodies by a rich draught from the sea, with fish (which possibly He had created for the occasion), He inquires after their souls’ health and prosperity, beginning with the one who might be supposed to have been in the most sickly condition, the one who had denied his Master thrice, and wept bitterly—even Simon Peter. “Simon, son of Jonas,” said Jesus, “lovest thou me?”

Without preface, for we shall have but little time this morning—may God help us to make good use of it!—we shall mention three things. First, *a solemn question*—“Lovest thou me?” Secondly, *a discreet answer*, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you,” and thirdly, *a required demonstration of the fact*, “He said unto him, Feed my lambs,” or again, “Feed my sheep.”

I. First, then, here was a SOLEMN QUESTION, which our Savior put to Peter, not for His own information, for, as Peter said, “You know that I love you,” but for Peter’s examination.

It is well, especially after a foul sin, that the Christian should well probe the wound. It is right that he should examine himself, for sin gives grave cause for suspicion, and it would be wrong for a Christian to live an hour with a suspicion concerning his spiritual estate, unless he occupy that hour in examination of himself. Self-examination should more especially follow sin, though it ought to be the daily habit of every Christian, and should be practiced by him perpetually.

Our Savior, I say, asked this question of Peter, that he might ask it of himself, so we may suppose it asked of us this morning that we may put it to our own hearts. Let each one ask himself then, in his Savior’s name, for his own profit, “Lovest thou the Lord? Love you the Savior? Love you the ever-blessed Redeemer?”

Note what this question was. *It was a question concerning Peter’s love.* He did not say, “Simon, son of Jonas, fear you Me.” He did not say, “Do you admire Me? Do you adore Me?” Nor was it even a question concerning his faith. He did not say, “Simon, son of Jonas, believe you in Me?” But He asked him another question, “*Lovest thou me?*” I take it that is because love is the very best evidence of piety.

Love is the brightest of all the graces, and hence it becomes the best evidence. I do not believe love to be superior to faith, I believe faith to be the groundwork of our salvation, I think faith to be the mother grace, and love springs from it, faith I believe to be the root grace, and love grows from it. But then, faith is not an evidence for brightness equal to love. Faith, if we have it, is a sure and certain sign that we are God's children, and so is every other grace a sure and certain one, but many of them cannot be seen by others.

Love is a more sparkling one than any other. If I have a true fear of God in my heart, then am I God's child, but since fear is a grace that is more dim and has not that halo of glory over it that love has, love becomes one of the very best evidences and one of the easiest signs of discerning whether we are alive to the Savior. He that lacks love must lack also every other grace in the proportion in which he lacks love. If love be little, I believe it is a sign that faith is little, for he that believes much loves much. If love be little, fear will be little, and courage for God will be little, and whatsoever graces there be, though faith lies at the root of them all, yet do they so sweetly hang on love, that if love is weak, all the rest of the graces most assuredly will be so. Our Lord asked Peter, then, that question, "Lovest thou me?"

And note, again, that *He did not ask Peter anything about his doings*. He did not say, "Simon Peter, how much have you wept? How often have you done penance on account of your great sin? How often have you on your knees sought mercy at My hand for the slight you have done to Me, and for that terrible cursing and swearing wherewith you did disown your Lord, whom you had declared you would follow even to prison and to death?" No, it was not in reference to his works, but in reference to the state of his heart that Jesus said, "Lovest thou me?" To teach us this, that though works do follow after a sincere love, yet love excels the works, and works without love are not evidences worth having.

We may have some tears, but they are not the tears that God shall accept, if there be no love to Him. We may have some works, but they are not acceptable works, if they are not done out of love to His person. We may perform very many of the outward, ritual observances of religion, but unless love lies at the bottom, all these things are vain and useless. The question, then, "Lovest thou me?" is a very vital question, far more so than one that merely concerns the outward conduct. It is a question that goes into the very heart, and in such a way that it brings the whole heart to one question, for if love be wrong, everything else is wrong. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

Ah! dear beloved, we have very much cause for asking ourselves this question. If our Savior were no more than a man like ourselves, He might often doubt whether we love Him at all. Let me just remind you of sundry things which give us very great cause to ask this question: "Lovest thou me?"

I will deal only with the last week. Come, my Christian brother, look at your own conduct. Do not your sins make you doubt whether you do love your Master? Come, look over the sins of this week, when you were speaking with an angry word and with a sullen look, might not your Lord have touched you, and said, "Lovest thou me?" When you were doing such-and-such a thing, which you right well knew in your conscience was not according to His precept, might He not have said, "Lovest thou me?" Can you not remember the murmuring words because something had gone wrong with you in business this week, and you were speaking ill of the God of providence for it? Oh, might not the loving Savior, with pity in His languid eye, have said to you, "What speak you? Lovest you Me?"

I need not stop to mention the various sins of which you have been guilty. You have sinned, I am sure, enough to give good ground for self-suspicion, if you did not still hang on this, that His love to you, not your love to Him, is the seal of your discipleship. Oh, do you not think within yourselves, "If I had loved Him more, should I have sinned so much? And oh, can I love Him when I have broken so many of His commandments? Have I reflected His glorious image to the world as I should have done? Have I not wasted many hours within this week that I might have spent in winning souls to Him? Have I not thrown away many precious moments in light and frivolous conversation which I might have spent in earnest prayer? Oh! how many words have I uttered, which if they have not been filthy (as I trust they have not), yet have not been such as have ministered grace to the hearers? Oh, how many follies have I

indulged in? How many sins have I winked at? How many crimes have I covered over? How have I made my Savior's heart bleed? How have I done dishonor to His cause? How have I in some degree disgraced my heart's profession of love to Him?" Oh, ask these questions of yourself, beloved, and say, "Is this your kindness to your Friend?"

But I hope this week has been one wherein you have sinned little openly as to the world, or even in your own estimation, as to open acts of crime. But now let me put another question to you, *Does not your worldliness make you doubt?* How have you been occupied with the world, from Monday morning to the last hour of Saturday night? You have scarcely had time to think of Him. What corners have you pushed your Jesus into to make room for your bales of goods? How have you stowed Him away into one short five minutes, to make room for your ledger or your day-book? How little time have you given to Him! You have been occupied with the shop, with the exchange, and the farmyard, and you have had little time to commune with Him! Come, just think! remember any one day this week, can you say that your soul always flew upward with passionate desires to Him? Did you pant like a hart for your Savior during the week? Nay, perhaps there was a whole day went by, and you scarcely thought of Him till the winding up of it, and then you could only upbraid yourself, "How have I forgotten Christ today? I have not beheld His person, I have not walked with Him, I have not done as Enoch did! I knew He would come into the shop with me, I knew He is such a blessed Christ that He would stand behind the counter with me, I knew He was such a joyous Lord Jesus that He would walk through the market with me! but I left Him at home and forgot Him all the day long." Surely, surely, beloved, when you remember your worldliness, you must say of yourself, "O Lord, you might well ask, 'Lovest thou me?'"

Consider again, I beseech you, *how cold you have been this week at the mercy seat.* You have been there, for you can not live without it, you have lifted up your heart in prayer, for you are a Christian, and prayer is as necessary to you as your breath. But oh! with what a poor asthmatic breath have you lived this week! How little have you breathed? Do not you remember how hurried was your prayer on Monday morning, how driven you were on Tuesday night? Can you not recollect how languid was your heart, when on another occasion you were on your knees? You have had little wrestling, perhaps, this week, little agonizing, you have had little of the prayer which prevails, you have scarcely laid hold of the horns of the altar, you have stood in the distance and seen the smoke at the altar, but you have not laid hold of the horns of it. Come, ask yourself, do not your prayers make you doubt?

I say, honestly before you all, my own prayers often make me doubt, and I know nothing that gives me more grave cause of disquietude. When I labor to pray—oh! that rascally devil!—fifty thousand thoughts he tries to inject to take me off from prayer, and when I will and must pray, oh, what an absence there is of that burning fervent desire, and when I would come right close to God, when I would weep my very eyes out in penitence, and would believe and take the blessing, oh, what little faith and what little penitence there is! Verily, I have thought that prayer has made me more unbelieving than anything else. I could believe over the tops of my sins, but sometimes I can scarcely believe over the tops of my prayers—for oh! how cold is prayer when it is cold! Of all things that are bad when cold, I think prayer is the worst, for it becomes like a very mockery, and instead of warming the heart, it makes it colder than it was before, and seems even to dampen its life and spirit, and fills it full of doubts whether it is really an heir of heaven and accepted of Christ. Oh! look at your cold prayers, Christian, and say is not your Savior right to ask this question very solemnly, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"

But stop again, just one more word for you to reflect upon. Perhaps you have had much prayer, and this has been a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. But yet, perhaps, you know, you have not gone so far this week as you might have done in another exercise of godliness that is even better than prayer—I mean *communion and fellowship.* Oh! beloved, you have this week had but little sitting under the apple tree, and finding its shadow great delight to you. You have not gone much this week to the banquet house, and had its banner of love over you. Come, think yourself, how little have you seen your Lord this week! Perhaps He has been absent the greater part of the time, and have you not groaned?

Have you not wept? Have you not sighed after Him? Sure, then, you can not have loved Him as you should, else you could not have borne His absence, you could not have endured it calmly, if you had the affection for Him a sanctified spirit has for its Lord.

You did have one sweet visit from Him in the week, and why did you let Him go? Why did you not constrain Him to abide with you? Why did you not lay hold of the skirts of His garment and say, “Why should You be like a wayfaring man, and as one that turns aside, and tarries for a night? Oh! my Lord, You shall dwell with me, I will keep You, I will detain You in my company, I cannot let You go, I love You, and I will constrain You to dwell with me this night and the next day, as long as I can keep You, I will keep You.” But no, you were foolish, you did let Him go. Oh! Soul, why did you not lay hold of His arm and say, “I will not let You go.” But you did lay hold on Him so feebly, you did suffer Him to depart so quickly, He might have turned round and said to you, as He said to Simon, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?”

Now, I have asked you all these questions because I have been asking them of myself. I feel that I must answer to nearly every one of them, “Lord, there is great cause for me to ask myself that question,” and I think that most of you, if you are honest to yourselves, will say the same. I do not approve of the man that says, “I know I love Christ, and I never have a doubt about it,” because we often have reason to doubt ourselves, a believer’s strong faith is not a strong faith in his own love to Christ—it is a strong faith in Christ’s love to him. There is no faith which always believes that it loves Christ. Strong faith has its conflicts, and a true believer will often wrestle in the very teeth of his own feelings. Lord, if I never did love You, nevertheless, if I am not a saint, I am a sinner. Lord, I still believe, help You my unbelief.

The disciple can believe, when he feels no love, for he can believe that Christ loves the soul, and when he has no evidence he can go to Christ without evidence and lay hold of Him, just as he is, with naked faith, and still hold fast by Him. Though he sees not His signs, though he walk in darkness and there be no light, still may he trust in the Lord, and stay upon His God—but to be certain at all times that we love the Lord is quite another matter, about this we have need continually to question ourselves, and most scrupulously to examine both the nature and the extent of our evidences.

II. And now I come to the second thing, which is A DISCREET ANSWER. “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?”

Simon gave a very good answer. Jesus asked him, in the first place, whether he loved Him better than others. Simon would not say that, he had once been a little proud—more than a little—and thought he was better than the other disciples. But this time he evaded that question, he would not say that he loved better than others. And I am sure there is no loving heart that will think it loves even better than the least of God’s children. I believe the higher a man is in grace, the lower he will be in his own esteem, and he will be the last person to claim any supremacy over others in the divine grace of love to Jesus. But mark how Simon Peter did answer, he did not answer as to the quantity but as to the quality of his love. He would aver that he loved Christ, but not that he loved Christ better than others. “Lord, I cannot say how much I love You, but You know all things, You know that I do love You. So far as I can aver, as to the quantity of my love, I cannot say much about it.”

But just notice, again, *the discreet manner in which Peter answered*. Some of us, if we had been asked that question, would have answered foolishly. We should have said, “Lord, I have preached for You so many times this week, Lord, I have distributed of my substance to the poor this week. Blessed be Your name, You have given me grace to walk humbly, faithfully, and honestly, and therefore, Lord, I think I can say, ‘I love You.’” We should have brought forward our good works before our Master, as being the evidences of our love, we should have said, “Lord, You have seen me during this week, as Nehemiah did of old, ‘Forget not my good works. O Lord, I thank you, I know they are Your gifts, but I think they are proofs of my love.’”

That would have been a very good answer if we had been questioned by our fellow man, and he had said, “You do not always love your Savior,” but it would be foolish for us to tell the Master that. Peter’s answer was wise, “Lord, You know that I love You.” You know the Master might have said to Peter,

had he appealed to his works, “Yes, you may preach, and yet not love Me, you may pray, after a fashion, and yet not love Me, you may do all these works and yet have no love to Me. I did not ask you what are the evidences of your love, I asked you the fact of it.” Very likely all my dear friends here would not have answered in the fashion I have supposed, but they would have said, “Love You Lord? Why, my heart is all on fire towards You, I feel as if I could go to prison and to death for You! Sometimes, when I think of You, my heart is ravished with bliss, and when You are absent, O Lord, I moan and cry like a dove that has lost its mate. Yes, I feel I love You, O my Christ.”

But that would have been very foolish, because although we may often rejoice in our own feelings—they are joyful things—it would not do to plead them with our Lord, for He might answer, “Ah! you feel joyful at the mention of My name. So, no doubt, has many a deluded one, because he had a fictitious faith, and a fancied hope in Christ, therefore the name of Christ seemed to gladden him. You say, ‘I have felt dull when You have been absent.’ That might have been accounted for from natural circumstances, you had a headache, perhaps, or some other ailment.” “But,” you say, “I felt so happy when He was present that I thought I could die.” Ah! in such manner Peter had spoken many a time before, but a sorry mess he made of it when he trusted his feelings, for he would have sunk into the sea but for Christ, and eternally damned his soul, if it had not been for His grace, when, with cursing and swearing he thrice denied his Lord. But no, Peter was wise, he did not bring forward his frames and feelings, nor did he bring his evidences, though they are good in themselves, he did not bring them before Christ. But, as though he shall say, “Lord, I appeal to Your omnipotence. I am not going to tell You that the volume of my heart must contain such-and-such matter, because there is such-and-such a mark on its cover, for, Lord, you can read inside of it, and, therefore, I need not tell You what the title is, nor read over to You the index of the contents. Lord, You know that I love You.”

Now, could we, this morning, dear friends, give such an answer as that to the question? If Christ should come here, if He were now to walk down these aisles and along the pews, could we appeal to His own divine Omniscience, His infallible knowledge of our hearts, that we all love Him? There is a test-point between a hypocrite and a real Christian. If you are a hypocrite, you might say, “Lord, my minister knows that I love You, Lord, the deacons know that I love You, they think I do, for they have given me a ticket, the members think I love You, for they see me sitting at Your table, my friends think I love You, for they often hear me talk about You.”

But you could not say, “Lord, You know that I love You,” Your own heart is witness that your secret works belie your confession, for you are without prayer in secret, and you can preach a twenty minute prayer in public. You are niggardly and parsimonious in giving to the cause of Christ, but you can sport your name to be seen. You are an angry, petulant creature, but when you come to the house of God, you have a pious whine, and talk like a canting hypocrite, as if you were a very gentlemanly man, and never seemed angry. You can take your Maker’s name in vain, but if you hear another do it you would be mighty severe upon him. You affect to be very pious, and yet if men knew of that widow’s house that is sticking in your throat, and of that orphan’s patrimony which you have taken from him, you would leave off trumpeting your good deeds. Your own heart tells you that you are a liar before God.

But you, O sincere Christian, you can welcome your Lord’s question, and answer it with holy fear and gracious confidence. Yes, you may welcome the question. Such a question was never put to Judas. The Lord loved Peter so much that He was jealous over him, or He never would have thus challenged his attachment. And in this kind does He often appeal to the affections of those whom He dearly loves. The response likewise is recorded for you, “Lord, You know all things.” Can you not look up, though scorned by men, though even rejected by your minister, though kept back by the deacons, and looked upon with disesteem by some—can you not look up and say, “Lord, You know all things, You know that I love You”? Do it not in brag and bravado, but if you can do it sincerely, be happy, bless God that He has given you a sincere love to the Savior, and ask Him to increase it from a spark to a flame, and from a grain to a mountain. “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Yea, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.”

III. And now here is A DEMONSTRATION REQUIRED—“Feed my lambs: feed my sheep.”

That was Peter’s demonstration. It is not necessary that it should be our way of showing our love. There are different ways for different disciples. There are some who are not qualified to feed lambs, for they are only little lambs themselves. There are some that could not feed sheep, for they cannot at present see afar off, they are weak in the faith and not qualified to teach at all. They have other means, however, of showing their love to the Savior. Let us offer a few words upon this matter.

“Lovest thou me?” Then one of the best evidences you can give is *to feed My lambs*. Have I two or three little children that love and fear My name? If you want to do a deed, which shall show that you are a true lover, and not a proud pretender, go and feed them. Are there a few little ones whom I have purchased with My blood in an infant class? Do you want to do something which shall give evidence that you are indeed Mine? Then sit not down with the elders, dispute not in the temple, I did that Myself, but go you, and sit down with the young orphans, and teach them the way to the kingdom. “Feed my lambs.”

Dearly beloved, I have been of late perplexing myself with one thought, that our church government is not Scriptural. It is Scriptural as far as it goes, but it is not according to the whole of Scripture, neither do we practice many excellent things that ought to be practiced in our churches. We have received into our midst a large number of young persons, in the ancient churches that was what was called the catechism class—I believe there ought to be such a class now. The Sabbath school, I believe, is in the Scripture, and I think there ought to be on the Sabbath afternoon, a class of the young people of this church, who are members already, to be taught by some of the elder members.

Nowadays, when we get the lambs, we just turn them adrift in the meadow, and there we leave them. There are more than a hundred young people in this church who positively, though they are members, ought not to be left alone, but some of our elders, if we have elders, and some who ought to be ordained elders, should make it their business to teach them further, to instruct them in the faith, and so keep them hard and fast by the truth of Jesus Christ. If we had elders, as they had in all the apostolic churches, this might in some degree be attended to. But now the hands of our deacons are full, they do much of the work of the eldership, but they cannot do any more than they are doing, for they are toiling hard already.

I would that some here whom God has gifted, and who have time, would spend their afternoons in taking a class of those who live around them, of their younger brethren, asking them to their houses for prayer and pious instruction, that so the lambs of the flock may be fed. By God’s help I will take care of the sheep, I will endeavor under God to feed them, as well as I can, and preach the Gospel to them.

You that are older in the faith and stronger in it, need not that careful cautious feeding which is required by the lambs. But there are many in our midst, good pious souls who love the Savior as much as the sheep do, but one of their complaints which I have often heard is, “Oh! sir, I joined your church, I thought they would be all brothers and sisters to me, and that I could speak to them, and they would teach me and be kind to me. Oh! sir, I came and nobody spoke to me.” I say, “Why did you not speak to them first?” “Oh!” they reply, “I did not like.” Well, they should have liked, I am well aware, but if we had some means of feeding the lambs, it would be a good way of proving to our Savior and to the world, that we really do endeavor to follow Him. I hope some of my friends will take that hint, and if, in concert with me, my brethren in office will endeavor to do something in that way, I think it will be no mean proof of their love to Christ. “Feed my lambs,” is a great duty, let us try to practice it as we are able.

But, beloved, we cannot all do that, the lambs cannot feed the lambs, the sheep cannot feed the sheep exactly. There must be some appointed to these offices. And therefore, in the Savior’s name, allow me to say to some of you, that there are different kinds of proof you must give. “Simon son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He said unto him, Yea, Lord; you know that I love you.” Then preserve that prayer meeting, attend to it, see that it is kept going on, and that it does not fall to the ground. “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” See to your servants, see that they go to the house of God, and instruct them in the faith. There is a sister: Lovest thou Christ? “Yea, Lord.” Perhaps it is as much as you can do—perhaps it

is as much as you ought to do—to train up your children in the fear of the Lord. It is of no use to trouble yourselves about duties that God never meant you to do, and leave your own vineyard at home to itself. Just take care of your own children; perhaps that is as good a proof as Christ wants of you that you are feeding His lambs. You have your own office, to which Christ has appointed you, seek not to run away from it, but endeavor to do what you can to serve your Master therein.

But, I beseech you, do something to prove your love, do not be sitting down doing nothing. Do not be folding your hands and arms, for such people perplex a minister most, and bring the most ruin on a church—such as do nothing. You are always the most ready to find fault. I have marked it here, that the very people who are quarrelling with everything are the people that are doing nothing, or are good for nothing. They are sure to quarrel with everything else, because they are doing nothing themselves, and therefore they have time to find fault with other people. Do not O Christian, say that you love Christ, and yet do nothing for Him. Doing is a good sign of living, and he can scarcely be alive unto God that does nothing for God. We must let our works evidence the sincerity of our love to our Master.

“Oh!” say you, “but we are doing a little.” Can you do any more? If you can, then do it. If you cannot do more, then God requires no more of you, doing to the utmost of your ability is your best proof, but if you can do more, inasmuch as you keep back any part of what you can do, in that degree you give cause to yourselves to distrust your love to Christ. Do all you can to your very utmost, serve Him abundantly, ay, and superabundantly, seek to magnify His name, and if ever you do too much for Christ, come and tell me of it, if you ever do too much for Christ, tell the angels of it—but you will never do that. He gave Himself for you, give yourselves to Him.

You see, my friends, how I have been directing you to search your own hearts, and I am almost afraid that some of you will mistake my intention. Have I a poor soul here who really deplores the languor of her affections? Perhaps you have determined to ask yourself as many questions as you can with a view of reviving the languid sparks of love. Let me tell you then that the pure flame of love must be always nourished where it was first kindled. When I admonished you to look to yourself, it was only to detect the evil, would you find the remedy, you must direct your eyes, not to your own heart, but to the blessed heart of Jesus—to the Beloved One—to my gracious Lord and Master. And would you be ever conscious of the sweet swellings up of your heart towards Him, you can only prove this by a constant sense of His tender love to you.

I rejoice to know that the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of love, and the ministry of the Spirit is endeared to me in nothing so much as this, that He takes of the things of Jesus, and shows them to me, spreading abroad the Savior’s love in my heart, until it constrains all my passions, awakens the tenderest of all tender emotions, reveals my union to Him, and occasions my strong desire to serve Him. Let not *love* appear to you as a stern duty, or an arduous effort, rather look to Jesus, yield yourself up to His gracious charms till you are ravished with His beauty and preciousness. But ah! if you are slack in the proofs you give, I shall know you are not walking with Him in holy communion.

And allow me to suggest one profitable way of improving the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper. That is, while you are partaking of it, my friends, renew your dedication to Christ. Seek this morning to give yourselves over afresh to your Master. Say with your hearts, what I shall now say with my lips, “Oh! my precious Lord Jesus, I do love You, You know I have in some degree given myself to You up to this time, thanks to Your grace! Blessed be Your name, that You have accepted the deeds of so unworthy a servant. O Lord, I am conscious that I have not devoted myself to You as I ought, I know that in many things I have come short. I will make no resolution to live better to Your honor, but I will offer the prayer that You would help me so to do. Oh! Lord, I give to You my health, my life, my talents, my power, and all I have! You have bought me, and bought me wholly, then, Lord, take me this morning, baptize me in the Spirit, let me now feel an entire affection to Your blessed person. May I have that love which conquers sin and purifies the soul—that love which can dare danger and encounter difficulties for Your sake. May I henceforth and forever be a consecrated vessel of mercy, having been chosen of You

from before the foundation of the world! Help me to hold fast that solemn choice of Your service which I desire this morning, by Your grace to renew.”

And when you drink the blood of Christ, and eat His flesh spiritually—in the type and in the emblem, then I beseech you, let the solemn recollection of His agony and suffering for you inspire you with a greater love, that you may be more devoted to His service than ever. If that be done, I shall have the best of churches, if that be done by us, the Holy Spirit helping us to carry it out, we shall all be good men and true, holding fast by Him, and we shall not need to be ashamed in the awful day.

As for you who have never given yourselves to Christ, I dare not tell you to renew a vow which you have never made, nor dare I ask you to make a vow which you would never keep. I can only pray for you, that God the Savior would be pleased to reveal Himself unto your heart, that “a sense of blood-bought pardon” may “dissolve your hearts of stone,” that you may be brought to give yourselves to Him, knowing that if you have done that, you have the best proof that He has given Himself for you. May God Almighty bless you, those of you who depart, may He dismiss with His blessing, and those who remain, may you receive His favor, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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