

THE PERFUMING OF THE HEART

NO. 829

A SERMON
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*“And hope makes not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad
in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”*
Romans 5:5.

THE apostle sets before us a ladder like that which Jacob saw, the foot whereof rests upon the earth, but the top ascends to heaven. Tribulation is the foot, but we mount as we see that it works patience, and we climb again, for patience works experience, and we ascend yet once again, for experience sustains hope, and hope that makes not ashamed climbs up to the very heart of God, and the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us. I might compare these verses to those songs of degrees which were sung by the people as they went up to the temple, as they halted at each stage of the pilgrimage they sang a fresh psalm, and so David said, “They go from strength to strength; every one of them in Zion appears before God.”

The pilgrim sets out from the dull and desolate vale of tribulation, he journeys on to patience, and lifts up his psalm under the shadow of the rock, he removes his tent and journeys on to experience—beneath its wells and palm trees he refreshes himself, soon he marches on again from experience to hope, and never stays till the love of God is shed abroad in his heart, and he has reached the New Jerusalem, where he worships the ever blessed God and drinks full draughts of His eternal love.

In this text it seems to me as though our great Melchizedek, the Lord Jesus, came forth to refresh His warfaring and wayfaring people with bread and wine. You read of tribulations, these are the battles of the faithful, and in them they overcome even as Abraham overthrew the kings, and made them as driven stubble before his bow. The Lord's warriors are often faint and weary in them, but the love of God is graciously shed abroad in their hearts, and this is that sacred bread and wine that stays the Lord's people in their time of hunger, it becomes a sweet morsel to refresh them by the way, and keep them in good case till they eat the heavenly bread and drink the new wine all fresh and sparkling at the table of the marriage banquet, where they shall sit forever and ever with the glorious Bridegroom.

This morning, if we may be so helped of the Holy Ghost, we shall, first of all say a little upon *the love of God*, then upon *the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost*, and then upon *the confirmation which this gives to our hope*, since the apostle tells us that our hope is not ashamed, for this reason, that the love of God cheers and sustains us, being shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.

I. First, then, some little upon THE love OF God, a theme for breadth and depth like unto the vast Atlantic, whereon my little skiff loses itself as a mere speck on the infinite expanse. How shall I profess fully to express truths so vast that the greatest divines might lose themselves, and the most eloquent of speakers might fail? The love of God—how shall I attempt to speak of it? I must but skim the surface, to dive into its depths were impossible to me.

Think, for a minute, first of all, of what it is—*the love of God*. Now the pity of God towards the suffering I can understand, because of the goodness of His nature. The kindness of God towards the needy I can comprehend, because of the liberality of His character. That He should have compassion upon such as are ignorant and out of the way, that He should look constantly with tenderness upon those who are sore broken and ready to perish is easy enough for me to believe, but this is not what is spoken of in the text. It is not compassion, nor tenderness, nor pity, but it is love, which is something more than all these.

You pity the beggar whom you could not love, you have compassion upon the villain in whom you could have no complacency, you look with tenderness upon sufferers who have nothing in their character or in their persons to attract your affection. Men usually think that they have gone far enough

when they have rendered kindness, even if the heart glow with no affection, and they, as a rule, take this to be the rendering of love towards their neighbor, when they have permitted their compassion and tenderness to exhibit themselves, they feel that all is done that is demanded of them. But the text speaks not of this, but of love, direct attachment and affection, and of the love of God.

I beseech you, my brethren, as you sit here, lift up your souls, bid your understandings stand on tiptoe, and endeavor fully to grasp the idea of divine love. If you be in Christ Jesus, this day God loves you, but to whereunto shall I liken love as it streams from the heart of JEHOVAH? We try to guess at what God's love to one of His people may be by our love to our own children, to our spouse, to our friend. Now in a far higher degree and sublimer sense, and after a loftier sort, even so God loves the people of His choice.

Consider this believer and be astonished, that love should come from God to such a one as yourself. The Lord loves you. He has a complacency and a delight in you. You give Him pleasure, He watches for your good, you are one of His household, your name is written on His heart. He loves you, can you catch the thought? If so there is no praise that can express your gratitude. Solemn silence will perhaps be the only vehicle that shall seem fitting for your soul's adoration. Revolve the personal thought again and again in your soul! He that made the heavens and the earth loves me! He whose angels fly as lightning to obey His behests, the tramp of whose marching shakes both heaven and earth, whose smile is heaven, and whose frown is hell, loves me!

Infinite, almighty, omniscient, eternal, a mind inconceivable, a Spirit that is not to be comprehended, but He, even He has set His love upon the sons of men, and upon me. Let each believer say in his heart, "Upon me among the rest." Oh, but this is astounding, this is marvelous! He has said to us what He never said to angels, for unto which of the angels said He at any time, "You are my son"? to which of all the glorified spirits has He said, "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you"? Where read you that He shed His blood for angels, or poured out His heart for seraphim and cherubim?

*"Never did angels taste above
Redeeming grace and dying love."*

God's dearest love has been hoarded up for worms, saved for the creatures of a day, reserved for us poor ephemera who are and are not, that we should be favored above all that live. It is not for tongues to tell out this wonder, but spiritual minds helped from on high may feel in solemn stillness what a mystery is here.

If you would have this morning, this love shed abroad in your hearts, I must ask you to consider carefully *who it is* that loves you, namely, the Most High God. To be loved I have already said is a sublime thought, but to be loved *of Him* is a right royal thing, surpassing thought as far as the heaven is above the earth. A courtier will often think it quite enough for him if he has the favor of his prince. What means that favor? It means riches, it means pleasure, it means honor. All that the courtier wants is wrapped up in the royal smile. And, believer, what does the love of the King of kings mean to you? If you estimate it rightly, not only all that you now want, but all that you can ever need, all that the flights of fancy or the conceptions of understanding can bring before you are contained in that one fact, the Lord loves you. For when JEHOVAH loves He brings His power to help His love, His infinite wisdom to contrive ways for delighting the objects of His choice, and every other attribute of His transcendent nature works and co-operates with love for the good of the chosen ones.

You have all things if you have your Father's love, O child of God. You have no ambition surely. Here all your aspirations may sit down content—to be loved of God is enough and more than enough for the largest wish. Caesar's imperial couch is hard compared with the bosom of God. Caesar's scepter is a cumbrous thing compared with the ring of God's love which surrounds our finger. Give us but the Father's love, and who will may have the Indies. Ay, let the worlds be given to whom God may please, as men give husks to swine, if we may but have His love it is enough—our soul is filled to the brim, and flows over with satisfaction.

Consider, I say, *who it is* that loves you, and surely your heart will leap at the very sound of His name, and feel it to be a matchless thing to be loved of JEHOVAH, the only living God.

Think yet again of *what He is who so loves you*. Very much of the value of affection depends upon the object from whom it comes. It would be a very small thing, certainly, to have the complacency of some of our fellow creatures, whose judgment is so perverted that their praise might almost be considered censure. To have the love of the good, the holy, and the excellent, this is truest wealth, and so to enjoy the love of God is an utterly priceless thing! No mention can be made of coral, and as for rubies they shall not be mentioned in comparison therewith. God, the thrice Holy One, who cannot love that which is unholy and defiled, cannot take complacency in that which is contrary to Himself—yet looks on us through His Son, and viewing us in Christ Jesus, sees no sin in Jacob, neither iniquity in Israel, and therefore, can love us with complacency and delight. Oh, how this exalts us! We are nothing in ourselves, but how this makes us feel the gentleness of the Lord in making such base things to be so great by merely loving them.

See you not how graciously the Lord can fit a man to be loved, and then can shed abroad within his heart an abundance of love, which must have been an unknown thing there unless grace had changed and renewed it? To be loved of God! O sirs, some think it a great thing to be applauded of the crowd, but watch the breath of the multitude—how soon it is blown aside! From men upon whom it was most lavished, from them it is soon taken. What do you think of the approval of the wisest and best of men? What is their wisdom but folly in the sight of God? and what is their approbation often but a mistake? But to be approved of Him before whom the heavens are not pure, and who charged His angels with folly! Beloved, this is such a thing as might make you sit down and lose yourselves in blissful meditation, even until you found yourselves in heaven.

Still further to lead your minds into this love of God, *let me remind you of the remarkable characteristics of that love*. The love of God towards His people is a heaven-born affection, it sprang from no source but itself. God loves His people because He will love them, and for no other reason known to us. Divine love is not caused by any excellence in the creature, either created or foreseen, its springs are within itself. We do not believe in the eternity and self-existence of matter, but we do believe in the eternity and self-existence of divine love. The Godhead seeks no reason for love to fallen men beyond its own determination and purpose. The Lord chose His people at the first in the exercise of His sovereign will. He loved them then because “He will have compassion on whom he will have compassion.” He then united them to Christ, and viewing them as Christ’s bride, beholding them as members of Jesus’ body, He loved them with divine complacency, the love not springing from anything in them, but altogether from that which is within Himself and in His own dear Son, a causeless love, so far as outward causes are concerned, caused only by the fact that God in His nature and essence is love.

As this love was uncreated, so it is *self-sustaining*. It is like the Deity itself. It borrows nothing from without, it bears its life and strength within its own heart. The Lord loves you not today, Christian, because of anything you are doing, or being, or saying, or thinking, but He loves you still, because His great heart is full of love, and it runs over to you. I do rejoice to think that this love sits on no precarious throne, nor borrows leave to be. It lives, and shall live as long as God lives. None shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, and so long as God exists, this fire of love, fed upon its own fuel, unsupplied by any human hand, shall continue still to flame forth towards the chosen seed.

This love too, it is sweet to remember, is *utterly unbounded and altogether unequalled*. You cannot say of God’s love it has gone thereto, but it shall go no further. It is impossible to conceive a point beyond its glorious tide, but if there were such a point, it would yet reach it, for the love of God glories to be without limit of any kind towards His people. He loves us much better than we love our children, for we often love them so badly that we bring them up to evil, and we tolerate them in sin. He loves us better than we love ourselves, for self-love it is that ruins us, but God’s love it is that saves us, and lifts us up to heaven and to perfection. There is no love that can any more be compared with God’s, than the faint gleam of a candle can be likened to the blaze of the sun at noonday. He loves His people so much that He gives them all that He has. Earth, with all its providential arrangements, He consecrates to them, that all things may work together for their good. Heaven itself He gives them, and since He wills it so, they shall even sit upon the throne of Christ, to reign with Him.

As for His own Son, His choicest and greatest treasure, a treasure the like of which heaven and earth could not match, “God spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all; how shall he not

with him also freely give us all things?" The divine love has no shore. Enterprising mariner, your thought may spread its sail and catch the favoring wind of the eternal Spirit, but if you shall fly on, and on, forever and forever, over ceaseless waves of new discovery, yet shall you never find a limit either to the infinite God, or to His infinite love, for the two are as one. As the Father has loved Christ, even so has He loved His people, and herein let them rejoice, for they rest. A love without a parallel! Blessed be God for it.

So, beloved, let us reflect too, that this love is *unvarying and unsleeping*. He never loves them less, He cannot love them more. God loves each one of His people as much as if there were only that one created being in all heaven or earth, and as if there were no other object for Him to set His love upon. For the multiplicity of the saints does not diminish the infinite love which each one enjoys. The Lord would not love better the one only redeemed one, if but one had been bought with blood, than He loves each one ransomed from the fall. A greater excess of love there cannot be, God loves His people with all His heart, diminution of His love there shall not be, for He has said that there is neither variableness nor shadow of a turning with the Father of lights. He changes not, therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed.

Brethren, how sweet it is to think that though a mother's love towards a child cannot, when her weariness has worn her out, keep her awake every night when the child is sick, and perhaps the little one may be in want while the mother necessarily is asleep—yet this can never happen to our God. No fatigue, no exhaustion, no faintness, can ever make a pause in the Lord's loving oversight of the saints. Never for a single moment does He forget His church. His heart always beats high towards His chosen, and at every moment He shows Himself strong for the defense of those that trust Him.

If there were a minute in which God left you, child of God, you might indeed be wretched, but since there is no such period, rejoice exceedingly in the daily presence of your heavenly Father, and endeavor to walk worthy of it. Let every day be a holy day bright with the light of this constant love. Put on your garments as though they were priestly vestments, go forth to your daily labor as to sacerdotal service, go to your house as to a temple, come hither to the assembly of God's saints like a great congregation of priests, who come together on the feasts of the Most High to offer sacrifices to their ever present God. Well may you into whose eyes this love has gleamed, and upon whose hearts the divine warmth of this love is perpetually streaming, live after a nobler fashion than the common herd of men.

Lastly upon this matter of the love of God, we triumphantly believe that it is *undying and unfailing*. God will never cease to love the objects of His choice. They shall grow grey with age, but not His love. They shall live on when this poor earth has melted, and the elements have dissolved, but His love shall remain with them, it shall not perish in the conflagration, nor shall the covenant of His grace be consumed. They shall live on when the universe has gone back to its original nothingness, if so the Lord ordains it, but in the eternities to come still shall that love of God be ever fresh and ever new.

To my mind, it always seems to be the very sweetest part of the Gospel, that when the love of God has once been shed abroad in a man's soul, and he has really enjoyed it, and known by the witness of the Holy Ghost that he is the object of the divine affection, there is no fear that he shall ever be driven from the divine presence, or become an outcast and an apostate, for whom Jesus loves He loves even to the end. He keeps the feet of His saints, none of those who trust in Him shall be desolate. He gives unto His sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hand. "Because I live you shall live also," says He. Oh, precious truth, the very marrow and fatness of the Word of God! May you have the grace to feel it, as well as believe it, to rejoice in it as well as understand it, and so may the love of God be shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost which He has given unto you.

II. THE LOVE OF GOD IS SHED ABROAD.

Shall we try to illustrate these words by common things? Here is an alabaster box of very precious ointment, it holds within the costly frankincense of the love of God, but we know nothing of it, for it is closed up, a mystery, a secret. The Holy Spirit opens the box, and now the fragrance fills the chamber in which the ten thousand times ten thousand of the elect are sitting, for now the love is shed abroad, every spiritual taste perceives it, heaven and earth are perfumed with it.

Frequently at the great Roman games the emperors in order to gratify the citizens of Rome, would cause sweet perfumes to be rained down upon them through the awning which covered the amphitheatre.

Behold the vases, the huge vessels of perfume! yes, but there is nought here to delight you as long as the jars are sealed, but let the vases be opened, and the vessels be poured out, and let the drops of perfumed rain begin to descend, and everyone is refreshed and gratified thereby. Such is the love of God. There is a richness and a fullness in it, but it is not perceived till the Spirit of God pours it out like a rain of fragrance over the heads and hearts of all the living children of God. See, then, the need of having the love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost!

Observe that no one can shed abroad the love of God in the heart but the Holy Ghost. It is He that first puts it there. Men live in neglect of this love till He first impresses them with a sense of the value of it, and they continue to seek after it in vain till He opens the door and introduces them into the secret chamber of its mystery. It is the Holy Ghost who educates us in the art of divine love. Not a letter can we read in God's love-book till we are taught of the Holy Ghost. He is the great Master of the house, the great Steward bringing forth the precious things of God to our souls. No man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost, much less can a man be assured that he is the object of eternal love but by a revelation made to him by the Holy Spirit who makes this delightful truth clear to his mind.

Do you inquire in what way is the love of God shed abroad? I reply that to the best of my knowledge and experience, the gracious operation is somewhat upon this wise. The Holy Spirit enables the man to be assured that he is an object of the divine love in the first place. The man comes to the cross as a guilty sinner, looks up to the five wounds, those dear fountains of pardoning grace, trusts himself in the living Savior's hands, and then he cries, "I am saved, for I have God's promise to that effect. Now, since I am saved, I must have been the object of the Lord's love, there must have been a marvelous love which gave that blessed Son of God to bleed for me." The man does not doubt it, he is assured of it in his own spirit, and then the Spirit of God, whose operations are far beyond all our knowledge, confirms the testimony of his conscience. We need not attempt to comprehend the working of the Holy Spirit, for as we know not even how the wind blows, much less shall we know how the Comforter works, but this we know, that He adds a confirmatory testimony to the witness of our own hearts, He bears witness with our spirits that we are born of God, and so we become infallibly, and beyond all possibility of mistake assured that the love of God is ours, and that we have a part and an interest in it.

Then, the next thing the Spirit of God does, is to make the man clearly understand what kind of love this is which God gives to him. He leads him not all at once, perhaps, but by degrees, into all truth. He takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to the believer's heart, till the believer understands that this love of God to him is such a love as I have been describing just now. He clearly perceives JEHOVAH'S love in its length, and breadth, and height, and wonders at it for all the marvels which it has wrought. This admirable enlightenment is no small part of the shedding abroad of the love of God. A man must know before he can enjoy, and in proportion as the eyes of his understanding are opened will he be able to enter into the delightful experience of the secret love of Jesus.

And then comes the point—the essence of the matter—the Holy spirit enables the soul to meditate upon this love, casts out the cares of the world, lifts it up above doubts and fears, and temptations, makes a blessed quiet, a divine Sabbath within the heart, and then the man while he meditates finds a fire begins to burn within his soul. Meditating yet more, he is as it were carried off his feet, lifted up from the things of the earth. Meditating still, and considering, and weighing, he comes to be in an amazement, he marvels, he is astonished, and then he is filled with strong emotion. He is devoutly grateful.

"Blessed be the Lord," says he, "who has remembered my low estate, and has loved one so unworthy." He breaks out into a song like that of the Virgin, "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." Then while gratitude is still within his soul, a divine resignation to all the Master's will keeps rule within him. JEHOVAH loves me, then what matters though every bone should ache, and the heart should throb, and the head be heavy? What matters though the cottage walls be bare, and the table is but scantily furnished? my Father, do You as You will.

Then follows a rapturous leaping over this devout calm, a joy unutterable, next akin to heaven fills the heart, and this joy sometimes takes the character of ecstasy until whether the man is in the body or out of the body, he cannot tell, God knows. Then if he be alone perhaps time flies and he seems to anticipate eternity, forgetting the lapse of hours, and if he be in company with others, his lips teach

many, his words are better than pearls and his sentences than strings of coral. The Master's love makes him to wear a brightness about his countenance and a transfiguration glory about his character which others who have tasted of the like understand, but which to the worldling seems to be the effect of madness or of drunkenness with new wine, like that of the famous Pentecostal morning.

Yes, brethren and sisters, if you know what it is to have the love of God shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Ghost, you will perhaps wonder that I cannot paint it better, but I would like any of you to try. You shall find it far easier to enjoy it than to depict it, for this seems to me to be one of those things in its heights and depths which it were almost unlawful for a man to utter. This master-thought of JEHOVAH'S love to us, bears us as on eagles' wings, takes us up beyond the smoke and din and dust of this poor world, sets us in the heavenly places at the right hand of Christ, enthrones us, puts a crown upon our head, ennobles us, wraps us about with the white linen that we are to wear forever, makes us, while yet we are poor, to be as angels in the midst of the sons of men. The Lord give us this soul-elevating influence more and more. May this transcendent experience be our constant and daily enjoyment so shall we be ripening for heaven, and it will not be long before the gates of pearl shall open to admit us into the presence of God, for which this experience is a most fitting preparation.

III. Lastly, this inexpressible sweetness of which we have spoken becomes THE CONFIRMATION OF OUR HOPE.

Hope rests itself mainly upon that which is not seen, it builds itself upon the promise of God, whom eye has not beheld. Still it is exceedingly sweet to us while we are in this body, if we receive some evidence and token of divine love which we can positively enjoy even now.

You remember Master Bunyan in the Pilgrim, how he writes the dialog which took place when the Pilgrim was met by Atheist. Atheist snaps his fingers, and he cries, with jeer and laugh, "You fools, you are seeking for a New Jerusalem, there is no such place. I have been seeking this city these twenty years, but find no more of it than I did the day I first set out. I tell you there is no such thing as a world beyond the stream, there are no harps of gold, no brightness—you are deceived men." "But," said Hopeful, "how say you so, did we not see the gate of the city from the Delectable Mountains?" He might have added, "I do remember when I stood with the shepherds on the top of Mount Clear that I saw the city, I looked through the telescope, and I saw it, and therefore I am not deceived, but I follow after that which my eyes have gazed upon."

See you then how the present enjoyments of divine love in the soul become to us arguments for the reality of the things which we are hoping for, and our hope is not ashamed, because God gives to us, even here, such emotions of spiritual delight, that we anticipate the raptures of the hereafter, and confidently press forward to reach the promised rest. Why, blessed be God, there are some of us who do not want Butler's Analogy, or Paley's evidences, to back our faith, we have our own analogy and our own evidences within our own souls, written by the Holy Spirit on the day when we tasted that the Lord is gracious. No Jesus Christ! with whom then have we spoken all these years, and upon whose bosom have we leaned? No Holy Spirit! what mysterious agency then is that which strings the chords of our soul, and fetches superhuman music from them, causing us to delight in sublime and celestial themes to which once we were strangers? What is that power which casts us down to the earth in solemn awe of the Great Invisible, and then again bears us out of ourselves up to the seventh heaven? No Father God! Tell not His children so barefaced a lie!

It was not long ago, I am informed, that a certain infidel lecturer gave an opportunity to persons to reply to him after the lecture, and he was of course expecting that some young men would rise to bring the general arguments for Christianity which he was quite prepared to overturn and laugh at. But an old lady, carrying a basket, and wearing an ancient bonnet, and altogether dressed in the antique fashion, which marked both her age and her poverty, came on the platform. Putting down her basket and umbrella, she began, and said, "I paid three-pence to hear of something better than Jesus Christ, and I have not heard it. Now let me tell you what religion has done for me, and then tell me something better, or else you've cheated me out of the three-pence which I paid to come in.

"Now," she said, "I've been a widow forty years, and I had ten children, and I trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ in the depth of poverty, and He appeared for me and comforted me, and helped me to bring up my children so that they have grown up and turned out respectable. I was often very sore pressed, but

my prayers were heard by my Father in heaven, and I was always delivered. Now you are going to tell me something better than that, better for a poor woman like me! I have been to the Lord sometimes when I've been very low indeed, and there's been scarcely anything for us to eat, and I've always found His providence has been good and kind to me. And when I lay very sick, I thought I was dying, and my heart was ready to break at leaving my poor fatherless little ones, and there was nothing kept me up but the thought of Jesus and His faithful love to my poor soul, and you tell me it was all a mistake. Now, tell me something better, or else why do you cheat us of these three-pence? Tell us something better."

Well, poor soul, the lecturer was a good hand at an argument, but such a mode of controversy was novel, and not readily met, and therefore he gave up the contest, and merely said, really the dear old woman was so happy in her deception, he should not like to undeceive her. "No," she said, "that won't do. Facts are facts. Jesus Christ has been all this to me, and I could not sit down in the hall and hear you talk against Him without coming and saying this and asking you whether you could tell me something better than what He has done for me. I've tried and proved Him, and that's more than you have." Ah! it is that, it is the testing and proving of God, it is the getting the love really shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost which affords us an argument which cannot be answered.

Experience is the iron file against which the viper breaks his teeth, but cannot prevail. God gives us even here a foretaste of heaven's supernatural enjoyment, in the forms of peace, calm, bliss, exultation, delight. This may seem fanatical talk to some, and a mere dream to others, but, sirs, we are as honest men as you are, and we as much claim to be believed when we assert that we enjoy these things as you claim our credence when you make an assertion. And if this convinces you not, and you still doubt us, rest assured that it convinces us, and that shall suffice. The love of God shed abroad in the heart makes our hope, so that it is not ashamed.

See, brethren, the love of God is often shed abroad in the heart when we are very sick. When pain is most severe, joy has often been at its fullest. This love has come to paupers in the union house, and turned the workhouse into a palace. It has come to the dying in the hospitals, and made the wards to ring with heavenly music. It has come to some of us in nights of the deepest depression through which the human mind could pass, and it has lifted us right up out of the mist and the cloud, and set us in the sunlight of God.

Now, these things coming at such times tend greatly to make the child of God feel that his hope is as sure in the dark as it is in the light, and that he can trust his God though all things should seem to belie the promise. These things are of such an elevated nature that they help to maintain an elevated hope. If our comforts were gross and carnal, to be received by the mouth or by the ear, of what service would they be to that high and holy hope which comes from God Himself? But the enjoyments, of which I have been speaking in the reception of the divine love in the heart, are so elevating that they precisely suit the character of our hope, and our hope is confirmed thereby.

For, beloved, a sense of the love of God confirms everything that we hope for. If God loves me, then I am forgiven; if God loves me, then I am secure; if God loves me, then my circumstances are well ordered; if God loves me, then He will bear me through my trials; if God loves me, then He will keep me from the touch of sin; if God loves me, He will not suffer temptation to overcome me, but He will keep me pure and holy, and receive me to Himself at the last; if God loves me, then the heaven which He has prepared for His people must be mine, and with those who have gone before, I shall see His face, I shall drink draughts of His love, and be with Him forever and ever. Like a master-key that locks up every lock in the house, so does the sense of the love of God lock up every treasure in the covenant of grace, and if we have it within us it affords us admission to every blessed thing, so that we may take at our will, and rejoice in God on account of it.

Now I have no more to say upon this point, upon which I have spoken so exceedingly feebly to my own consciousness. But I would to God that you all knew even the little that I can tell you spiritually. To hear of divine love with the ear is nothing, it is like the rattle of the dishes in the ear of a hungry man when there is nothing given to him to feed on. To understand this theoretically is nothing, it is like being able to cast up thousands of pounds upon the slate, but having not a farthing in the purse.

My dear hearer, what is your hope? What are you resting upon? Has your hope anything to do with the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost? Depend upon it, if your hope is founded

on anything that you have done for yourself, or that any man may do for you, it will not excite in your soul a sense of the love of God. The thought of it, if it is a mere ceremonial hope, will excite no such emotions as those I have described. But if your hope be true and genuine, fixed on the Rock of Ages, built on the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ, then the thought of that hope will make you love God, and a sense of God's love to you will sway you to obedient service. Such a hope will endure the hour of trial, but no other hope will.

And what will you do if your hope shall fail you? if at last you are made ashamed of your hope? O see then, sirs, see then the overwhelming downfall which awaits you! The house was hastily built, it was fair and lofty, with many-colored windows, and fine gables and rare ornaments. But the floods are out, the rain descends, the wind blows, and where is the palace now? Its foundation was on sand, and it is gone like a dream. See the fragments of it floating down the torrent, while the owners are washed away and lost. And so shall it be with your fine hopes, O self-righteous or careless.

O build on the rock, on the rock of what Christ has done, build with a humble faith, build with an earnest love, build not with wood, hay, and stubble, but build with gold, and silver, and precious stones of His love, and trust, and holy fear. And when the deluge comes, you shall laugh at it and sing in the midst of storm, for God is your preserver, and under His wings shall you trust.

Ah, I would that everyone now listening to this voice could enter into so bright a hope, and enjoy such a love. And if they long to do so, behold the open door! The entrance into a good hope is by the door of divine love, and would you see divine love, there it shines in its resplendence on yonder cross where the Son of God, made flesh, gave His hands to the nails, and His feet to be fastened to the wood. There where every nerve is a road for the hot feet of pain to travel on, where His whole body is tortured with pangs unutterable, and the soul pressed as beneath the feet of Deity, in the winepress of eternal wrath, there, sinner, there is your hope. Not your tears, but *His* blood; not your sufferings, but *His* woes; not your penance, but *His* agonies; not your life nor your death, but *His* life and death.

O look to Him! "There's life in a look at the crucified One." Guilty one, depraved one, you all but damned one, look through the mists of Satan's temptations, and the dews of your tears, look to Jesus dying on Calvary, and you shall live this day. God help you by His blessed Spirit so to look—yours shall be the salvation, and His the honor of it. Amen and Amen.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.