

# ONE ASPECT OF CHRIST'S DEATH

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A SERMON  
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*“Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”*  
*John 15:13.*

I FELT, today, after a very weary, and, in some respects, a very sorrowful week, as if I could not preach tonight—or that if I did stand up to speak, it must be upon some very easy and simple theme, and, at the same time, it must be some great subject which would give me plenty of sea-room. I think the text I have read to you fulfills both these conditions. And although I shall not attempt to sail across it, or to fathom it, for that would be impossible, yet, at any rate, there will be no fear that I shall run aground, or need to exercise great skill in threading my way through a tortuous channel, where, perhaps, one might be on the rock, or the sandbank before he was aware of his danger. If there is anything about which Christians are sure—and concerning which they can speak with confidence, surely it is the love of Christ! And though that is one of the simplest things in the world, yet it is also the very sweetest. Whenever you spread the table for any meal, you are pretty sure to put bread and salt upon it. And whenever we preach, if we preach as we should, we are sure to have something of the savor of the love of Christ in our preaching. I have heard that in a certain country, the way in which a stranger is welcomed is by giving him just bread and salt—nothing more. That is what I am about to do. We will have bread and salt on the table—the essential things, the common things—but, blessed be God, with a fullness of nourishment, and a savor of tastefulness in them which those who are taught of God will be able to relish!

The death of Jesus Christ may be viewed in many aspects, but we, brothers and sisters, have learned to see very clearly the substitutionary character of it. It is our delight to believe that Christ laid down His life for the sake of His friends, thereby rendering complete satisfaction to offended justice, presenting Himself as a vicarious sacrifice in their place, so that they might be reconciled to God, and might be “accepted in the Beloved.” We are quite sure about this truth. We do not gather it from this particular verse which I have selected for my text, but from the whole run and tenor of Scripture, but especially from such a passage as this, “Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” This doctrine of redemption tallies with the types of the old Jewish dispensation, and corresponds with the prophetic descriptions of the promised Messiah, especially those wonderful chapters in Isaiah and Ezekiel in which His character is so accurately foretold. This view of Christ dying as the great substitutionary sacrifice for sinners cannot be dispensed with for a single moment—it seems to us to be the very essence of the gospel. Cloudiness with regard to this great central truth involves mistiness concerning everything else. And the poet was quite right when he wrote—

*“You cannot be right in the rest  
 Unless you think rightly of Him.”*

If you have any question about that great truth, you will have your brain more or less muddled concerning every other doctrine in the Word of God. And I would take this doctrine just as I would the doctrine of justification by faith, as being the test of a standing or falling church, and of a God-sent ministry!

Yet, brothers and sisters, there are other aspects of the death of Christ beside the one I have mentioned, and a Christian's eyes should see both the greater objects, and also the smaller ones. I am always glad that a painter does not merely give us the foreground of his picture, but gives us the background, too—and even when his painting is a portrait, and he desires to have all our attention fixed upon the portrait—yet he does not neglect the little accessories of the picture. They may be unimportant, but if they are properly painted, they will not distract attention from the main subject of the picture, but will rather help to point to it. Now, the death of Christ was the greatest possible display of the love of God to men. Never forget that it was not merely infinite justice that blazed forth from the cross, but also infinite affection! Indeed, the cross displayed all the attributes of God, and they can still be plainly perceived by those whose eyes have been divinely opened. God revealed Himself there, through the dying Savior, in a very wonderful way. If I may use such an image—and I think I may—through the smoked glass of the humanity of Christ, the Deity of God in all its fullness can be better seen by us than if we could, with our naked eyes, gaze upon the excessive brightness of that glory! Indeed, blindness would follow upon a vision of absolute Deity—if such a vision were even possible. To dwell long upon the doctrine of the Trinity, and to vex your mind with the various theories of that mysterious subject which men have imagined, is the sure road to Socinianism, or some other heresy! But, to see God veiled in human flesh and especially to see Him revealed in the person of the dying Mediator, is to see God in the only way in which He *can* be seen by mortal men! We do, not, therefore, for a moment forget that Christ's death was the greatest possible display of God's love to men.

It was, doubtless, also necessary to complete the perfect example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He would have set before us a grand example of self-denial and disinterested love, even if He had not died for us, for it was no little thing that He should make Himself of no reputation, and take upon Himself the form of a servant, and be made in the likeness of men, and humble Himself as He did. Still, becoming “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” was the crown of His life. It was because He endured the cross, despising the shame, that Paul wrote to the Hebrews, “Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds.” We also may remember that we “have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin,” but Christ has done this, and more than this! He knows what it is to be made perfect through sufferings. I have no doubt that they speak the truth who say that the death of Christ was the climax of His example, but I am going to call your attention to another aspect of His death, namely, as a display of His own love to His own people—“Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” This is, I believe, what Christ meant—that His love to His friends was to be most clearly made manifest by His dying for them!

There is no need, with such a subject as this, for the use of grand periods and eloquent language, even if I ever indulged in that kind of thing. But I shall just give utterance to a few simple truths which you already know, trying to stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance. And, first, *let us contemplate the love of Christ resplendent in the act of death, laying down His life for His friends.* Secondly, *let us see that love enhanced by a consideration of the friends for whom He laid down His life.* And then, thirdly, *let us see the love of Christ reflected and reproduced by His friends.* This, however, will have to be done outside this place—I can only make the rough outline of the picture which is to be drawn by all of you who are the friends of Christ. My text reminds us of one of the strongest reasons why we should love one another even as Christ has loved us—“Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

**I.** Let us, then, first SEE CHRIST'S LOVE RESPLENDENT IN THE LAYING DOWN OF HIS LIFE FOR HIS PEOPLE.

When He says, “Greater love has no man than this,” He seems to me to imply that there are manifestations of His love which are not as great as this. The love of the Lord Jesus Christ to His people is always great. I may truly say that it is always greater than any other love. I might even say that it is always in the superlative degree—the greatest love there ever was, or is, or can be! Yet there are

displays of that love which can be rightly described as great, greater, and greatest. Our Lord had already displayed His love to His people in the great, and the greater forms of it—now He was about to display it in the highest and greatest of all ways!

*It was great love that made Him come to this earth and be incarnate here.* Have you ever thought of the greatness of the love of Christ in being a child, a youth, a man, and of His love in being willing to live in obscurity and retirement as the Son of Mary for 30 years? Wondrous love was there in that arrangement by which He was able, from His own experience, to sympathize with retiring Christians, and with young believers whose duties do not cause them to be conspicuous in the world. The thought of God in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth is to me very wonderful. As Moses took off his shoes at the sight of God in the burning bush, we may well manifest our awe and reverence as we see the Son of God, the express image of His Father's person, in the midst of the implements used by the village carpenter! That was truly great love.

Then, when the time arrived for Him to come forth from His obscurity, *He showed great love to His friends in calling them to Him one by one.* His mind was altogether unique. He had the tenderness of a woman, yet He was to the highest degree, manly. Indeed, all the attributes of a perfect man, and a perfect woman appear to have been blessedly blessed in His perfect humanity. We might have supposed that He would have looked for companions somewhat like Himself, though I know not where He could have found them, but He seems to me to have looked for those whom, in a wondrous way, He could make to be like Himself rather than for those who were already like Himself! So He finds some fishermen—very rough fellows to be associated with the gentle Jesus! He finds a tax-gatherer—commercial, grasping—a strange companion for Him who cared not one farthing for gold or silver! The apostles, as a whole, were a motley crew. Speaking after the manner of men, one could almost account for Jesus choosing John, and there are some points in Peter that are very lovable, yet, as a band of men called to such exceptional service, they were rough and coarse! We might have thought that Christ would have looked for more refinement in those who were to be His daily companions for three years—and had He been thinking only of Himself, He might have sought others than He did seek. Certainly, brothers and sisters, in my own case, I have often felt that I could adopt the language of Faber, which we sang just now—

*“How many hearts You might have had  
More innocent than mine!  
How many souls more worthy far  
Of that pure touch of Thine!  
Ah, grace! Into unlikeliest heart  
It is your boast to come—  
The glory of your light to find  
In darkest spots a home.”*

So Jesus Christ showed His love to His friends in the very act of calling them to be His friends. And *He also showed His love in fitting them for the position to which He had called them.* He laid Himself out to teach them, to train them, to build up their characters upon a firm foundation, and to infuse into their minds right principles, and noble sentiments so that they could be fully qualified to be the servants of the churches, and the glory of Christ—vessels to be used no longer for merely worldly purposes, but to be meet for the Master's use! With what singular wisdom He trained them! With what patience He bore with them! Had they had any other master, they would, many a time, have been liable to be discharged for their stupidity, but He simply said, “Have I been so long a time with you, and yet have you not known Me, Philip?”

This was a proof of great love on His part, yet He seems to me to have shown even greater love when, towards the end of His life, *He bade these friends of His sit and eat and drink with Him at His table,* and expressed His desire that His friends should continue, in all later ages, thus to remember Him.

Then, after the supper, He rose from the table, laid aside His outer garment, took a towel and girded Himself—poured water into a basin, and washed His disciples' feet! Oh, this was great love indeed!

Still, our text talks about a greater display of Christ's love than this, so we conclude that while to choose and call, to instruct and edify, to entertain and refresh was proof of very great love on Christ's part—to die for His friends was evidence of still greater love. There are, in this world, many persons who will lay themselves out to help their fellow creatures to resist temptation, and to struggle out of the ways of vice into the path of virtue, and who would, with heroic self-denial, bring themselves well-near to the grave's mouth to accomplish these ends—but they will not lay down their lives for their fellows. If they did, it would be the greatest thing they could possibly do for them, for the text is true, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

But *our Lord was willing to die for His friends*. Some people might lay down their lives for their friends, but it would be quite unwillingly that they would do so. They might make the supreme sacrifice under the force of some strong compelling passion, yet they would escape if they could. But look at our blessed Lord and Master! When the time came for Him to go out of this world unto His Father, He did not make the slightest effort to escape from death. Judas knew the place where He was in the habit of going for private meditation and prayer—and to that very place our Master went, as He had often gone before, although He knew that He would meet the traitor there. When the officers and men from the chief priests and Pharisees came there with lanterns, and torches, and weapons, a word from Him made them fall to the ground! He could, therefore, in an instant, have driven them all out of the garden, and have escaped from them. But He did not do so. He could never have been delivered up to be put to death, either by Jews or by Romans, if He had not been perfectly willing to die! From the time when they took Him to Annas, to the moment when they nailed Him to the cross, one solitary wish on His part would have scattered all His foes, and He could have gone wherever He pleased—but He would not express such a wish, or even cherish it! Admire the wonderful reticence of Christ! That He did not speak in His own defense was marvelous, but, that He did not even wish to escape, or think of escaping, is still more amazing, for a *thought* would have been sufficient to have procured His release! How wonderfully omnipotence held in check omnipotence! How majestic does that almighty attribute appear when it proved its power over itself by not using the power which it manifestly possesses!

More than that, remember that *our Lord Jesus Christ was under no sort of necessity to die*. When a man lays down his life for his friend—and how seldom has that been done—he only anticipates the debt of nature which, in any case, he has to pay before long. If you were to die for me, or I were to die for you, tomorrow, we would both of us only do a little earlier what we must both ultimately do! Death will, before long, claim every one of us, and to the sepulcher we must all descend unless our Lord should speedily come. But He possessed inherent immortality! No sentence of death was written across His brow—He could live on forever even when He was in the grave—corruption could have no dominion over Him. He could say, with an emphasis that the psalmist could not use, "You will not leave My soul in hell; neither will You allow your Holy One to see corruption." So Jesus Christ's laying down of His life for His friends was beyond anything that could ever happen in any other man's life, a voluntary act and, consequently, a more wonderful display of love than could ever be given in any other case. "Greater love has no man than this."

We must also remember that *our Lord Jesus Christ had been accustomed, for many years, to contemplate the laying low of His life before He actually did so*. No, I must not speak of years—doubtless from *eternity* He had foreseen that terrible time when He would have to do battle on His people's behalf, with all the powers of darkness. He had looked forward to that hour with the strong glance of the eyes that could weep for sorrow, but could not grow dim with fear. And, often, when He was here below, He seemed to long for the time when He could make the master-sacrifice of His life. He said, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it is accomplished!" His face was set, not merely once, but in very deed *always*, steadfastly to go unto Jerusalem, knowing well all that would befall Him there. Now, what man is there who could look death in the face, for the sake of

his friend, year after year, and even contemplate it with ardent desire? We might, in an outburst of strong affection, in a moment of unusual excitement, be willing to leap into the gulf of death in order to rescue a sinking friend, but as for the quiet resolution that could calmly think it all over, and weigh every circumstance—and ponder over every detail, and then deliberately give oneself up to death—where could you find such a spirit as that? It is only to be seen in Him who has given the grandest display of love that was ever manifested on earth or even in heaven—and whose death was the grandest manifestation of that love!

Let me also further remind you that *our Lord Jesus Christ did actually die for His friends*. He was not merely willing to do so, and long contemplated dying, but He *did* really die, and He died under circumstances that rendered the laying down of His life for His friends the more remarkable! He died for them, yet they had all forsaken Him in the hour of His greatest need, after having fallen asleep, and left Him to endure in utter loneliness the agony of bloody sweat. When He was arraigned before His enemies, Peter, the boldest man in His little band of disciples, was so cowed with fear, that he denied, with oaths and curses, that he even *knew* Him! These “friends” of His were quite unworthy of His love, yet He died for them. Do men generally die for such “friends” as they proved themselves to be? No, but they have often cried with Job, “Miserable comforters are you all.” Yet Christ died for His friends though they forsook Him when He most needed their sympathy and support.

And *He had to die for them under a criminal charge*. I believe that there are many of us who would not be nearly as much startled by death as by a criminal accusation. When I have seen some good man whom I have highly esteemed, charged falsely, as I think, with high misdemeanors, I have felt that I would sooner die than be guilty of the crime of which he has been accused. But here is our gracious Lord and Master willingly giving Himself up to death although He is innocent of the crime's laid to His charge—sedition against the State, and blasphemy against God. It is a felon's death that He must die—not merely a death *like that* of a felon, but the death *of a felon*, for the verdict of one tribunal after another is that He is worthy of death—and the popular voice applauds the verdict, and cries, “Let Him be crucified!” O You blessed Son of God, were You thus numbered with the transgressors? Yes, He was. And this was the greatest manifestation of His love!

Let us not forget, too, that *Christ's death was attended by cruelties of the grossest sort*. I will not harrow up your feelings with any description of that terrible flagellation which He received at the hands of the Roman lictors. Yes, Christ did suffer intensely in many ways, as the prophet Isaiah had foretold that He would—“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.” All the sufferings of Christ—physical, mental, and spiritual—which were attendant upon His death, are to be regarded by us with awestruck and grateful emotions, for they help to make up the perfection of His wondrous work of laying down His life for His friends!

Remember, too, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as I have already reminded you, that *Christ, although He was absolutely innocent, did die as the Substitute for sinners*. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “For He (that is, God) has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” And to the Galatians He wrote, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.” To a pure mind, contact with sin in any form is truly horrible. I can imagine the Savior being willing to suffer, and even being willing to die—but His holy nature must have revolted at the thought that He must stand in the *sinner's* place, that He must be reckoned as the sinner, that against Him the sword of divine justice must be drawn, and that in His heart it must find a sheath! The great terror of Christ's death upon the cross must have been that it was the penalty for *sin*—the execution of the righteous judgment of God against unrighteousness and iniquity! None of us can even guess—perhaps the lost souls in hell cannot tell—what it must have been for Christ to have come thus under the wrath of God because of the sins of His people. When we have been deeply convinced of sin, we may have had some slight conception of

what it was, but our most vivid imagination must have been dim and feeble compared with the terrible reality!

Above all else, let us remember that *our Savior died forsaken of His God*. Even the martyrs were not obliged to do that. They stood at the stake and clapped their hands—they even sang songs of triumph amidst the fury of the flames! But Jesus had to cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” That is the pitiful wail of a broken heart, and a sinking spirit. It does not surprise us that “the earth did quake, and the rocks split”—it would have been a greater wonder if they had not been stirred at the sound of such grief as His! O beloved, greater love has no man than this, that he will even dare to die forsaken of his God! I thank God that *we* are not asked to do this! But Jesus did it for *us*, His friends! Oh, what amazing love is His! There is much more that might be said upon this stupendous theme, but I must ask the Holy Spirit to lead you into the mystery of those unknown deeps of suffering by which Christ manifested His love to His friends.

**II.** Now, secondly, I want to show you that THE LOVE OF CHRIST, IN LAYING DOWN HIS LIFE, WAS GREATLY ENHANCED BY THE CHARACTER OF THOSE FOR WHOM HE LAID DOWN HIS LIFE, namely, “His friends.”

Let it never be forgotten by us that this sacred title is one which our Lord Himself gave to His disciples—“I have called you friends.” If we are His disciples, we are also His friends. Our original title would have been enemies, for that is what we were—but He has transformed us into His friends, for “when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.” The text would not be true if you were to put the emphasis in the wrong place. “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his *friends*,” for Christ manifested greater love than that in laying down His life for His *enemies*! It is indeed surprising that He should have laid down His life for those who were His enemies, and who are only His friends because He has made them so. You scorned Him, you despised Him, you crucified Him, your sins were the nails, and the spear that pierced His hands, feet and side—yet He died for you! He was the sandalwood tree, and yours was the hand that held the axe that wounded Him, yet He perfumed the axe, and also the hand that wielded it—and healed that hand of all its leprosy—yes, healed your whole being of whatever disease it had. Thank God for love like that!

Then, putting aside the fact that we were once His enemies, think of the *greatness of His love in laying down His life for such insignificant people as we are*. I have heard the argument used by unbelievers that it is not feasible—considering the immense size of the universe, and the inconceivable number of starry worlds in it, that this little inconsiderable speck of a globe, which, in proportion to the rest of the universe, is as a single atom of dust to the entire chain of the Alps—to think that Christ should come to redeem the inhabitants of such a poor little world as this is, and that if He came to the earth at all, many of the poorest and meanest of the people would be the peculiar objects of His choice! Well, it *is* marvelous! It is a marvelous instance of the condescension of Christ—and while it may stagger the faith of some, it certainly inflames the love of others! We feel that if He condescends to choose us, our love shall rise to the utmost heights that it can reach—and we will bless and magnify the name of the Lord in that, while He took not up angels, He took up the seed of Abraham! While He left the fallen angels to perish without hope, He has come to save us, the fallen sons of Adam, and has laid down His life for us!

There is, however, a truth that is even more significant and instructive than that. It is not merely true that we were once Christ's enemies, and that we were also utterly insignificant and unworthy of His notice, but *it is amazing that He should lay down His life for such unworthy friends, even as friends, as we are*. There are some professing Christians who can speak of themselves in terms of admiration, but, from my inmost heart I loathe such speeches more and more every day that I live! Those who talk in such boastful fashion must be constituted very differently from me. While they are congratulating themselves upon all the good things that they find within themselves, I have to lie humbly at the foot of Christ's cross, and marvel that I am saved at all, for I know that I am saved. I have to wonder that I do not believe Christ more, and equally wonder that I am privileged to believe in Him at all—to wonder

that I do not love Him more, and equally to wonder that I love Him at all—to wonder that I am not holier, and equally to wonder that I have any desire to be holy at all considering what a polluted, debased, depraved nature I find still within my soul notwithstanding all that divine grace has done in me! If God were ever to allow the fountains of the great deeps of depravity to break up in the best man that lives, he would make as bad a devil as Satan, himself, is. I care nothing for what these boasters say concerning their own perfections—I feel sure that they do not know themselves, or they could not talk as they often do! There is tinder enough in the saint who is nearest to heaven to kindle another hell if God should but permit a spark to fall upon it. In the very best of men, there is an infernal and well-near infinite depth of depravity! Some Christians never seem to find this out. I almost wish that they might not do so, for it is a painful discovery for anyone to make—but it has the beneficial effect of making us cease from trusting in ourselves, and causing us to glory only in the Lord.

Why should Christ ever have loved *us*? Why should He ever have loved us? When at His table, we often have wandering thoughts. Even in our faith we often find a mixture of unbelief. Even when we love Him, we grieve that we do not love Him more. Even when we are closest to Him in communion, we have to smite our breast, and mourn that we do not enjoy the nearness we might have, and ought to have, for, after being so greatly loved by Christ, we ought to be sinless! Under such obligations to Christ as we have, we ought to be wholly sanctified—spirit, soul, and body—and never have a wandering thought, or an unholy desire. But that we are not what we ought to be is very clear. And the wonder is that Jesus Christ should ever have laid down His life for such miserable “friends” as we have proven ourselves to be! Beauty, you know, will often win affection against a man's better judgment, for there is something about it which is so attractive that it overcomes him. But Christ's love to us was not won by any beauty that He saw in us! When He says to us as the Bridegroom in the Song of Solomon says to His bride, “Turn away your eyes from Me, for they have overcome Me.” And when He says, “You are all fair, My love; there is no spot in you,” I think He must see Himself mirrored in us, and that this is why He loves us, for certainly there is nothing lovable in us but what He has bestowed upon us by His grace! I do not know what you, beloved, say concerning this theme upon which I have been speaking, but I think you will agree with me when I say that, to me, the superlative point of the love of Christ is that He laid down His life for *me*, unworthy as I have been even since I have been His friend!

**III.** I must speak very briefly upon the last point which is that THIS GREAT LOVE OF CHRIST IS TO BE REFLECTED AND REPRODUCED BY HIS FRIENDS.

Christ is the sun in our heavens, and His Church is the moon. Why does the sun shine upon the moon? For the moon's sake? Yes, in part, but also for the sake of the earth, which would be dark at night if the moon did not reflect the light it receives from the sun. Brother, sister, the light of Christ's love has fallen upon you, not only that it may benefit you, but also that you may reflect it!

First, *reflect it upon Christ*. He has loved you, so love Him in return! It is a blessed thing, sometimes, to do nothing but love Christ for a while. It is well, at least now and then, for us not to think so much of what we are going to do for Christ as of what He did for us, and what He is to us. If I ever try to secure a quiet half-hour's meditation upon His love to me, somebody is pretty sure to come and knock at the door. But if I can keep the door-knocker still, and get alone with my Lord, and only think about His love to me—not trying to elaborate any theories, or to understand any doctrines, but just sitting down with the view of loving Him who gave Himself for me—I tell you, sirs, that this thought is positively inebriating to the soul! It not merely refreshes, quickens, and consoles, but it absolutely overcomes us with intense delight till we feel as though we could only fall upon our face, and worship the Lamb who was slain for us! At such times we have to make our expressive silence mean His praise, for our soul is so full of His love that we cannot possibly express it. That is the first thing for Christians to do—as Christ is shining upon you with His love—shine back upon Him with your love!

Then, next, He said to His disciples, “This is My commandment, That you love one another, as I loved you.” *As you have received the light of Christ's love, pass it on to your fellow Christians.* Do you

want to know where to find Christ? He is dwelling in His people, and especially in His poor people, in His suffering people, in His tried people! So, when your heart is full of love to your Lord, let some of the light of it shine upon them! Perhaps this is a dark time with them, and a kind word from you, or a kind action, will be like the light of the moon to them in the middle of the night, and will cause them great gladness. The moon cannot shine as brightly as the sun does, and you cannot love as much as Christ does—but you can be like the moon, and shine with borrowed light—you can reflect upon others the light of the love which Christ has shed upon your own soul!

And when you have done that, remember that *your light will be even more needed in the dark world of the ungodly*. “Christ died for the ungodly,” and that is what you were once! O beloved, I pray you, love the sons of men! Somebody has asked, “How are we to convert sinners?” That is not our work. It is only the Spirit of God who can do that. But what we *can* do is this, we can *love* sinners to Christ. That is the way in which God says that He worked—“I drew them with words of a man, with bands of love.” I will give you this message as a text for you to preach upon practically all your life—*Love sinners to Christ!* Love the enmity out of them if they hate the gospel. Love the prejudice out of them if they cannot bear to hear it preached. Love them out of their vices! Love them up from their degradation, for love is of God, and God is love, and God dwells in love. That which is in Him, and comes from Him, is the best thing in the world to draw people to Him! So use no other cords but the cords of a man, and no bands but the bands of love. When you really love souls, it is amazing how wise you will be in dealing with them! I have never heard that anybody has opened a school for teaching young mothers how to manage their first babies, but, somehow or other, when love is in the mother's heart, she finds out the proper way to care for her baby. And better than any college training for the home or the foreign field of service for the Savior is it to get your heart full of love to your Lord. Then you will know how to do His work—it will come to you by a sort of sacred instinct. You will know when you are to tell them of the terrors of the law, and when to speak of the loveliness of Christ, and just how to deal with them under all manner of circumstances. The love of Christ will teach you how to do this if it is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit which is given unto you.

Oh, that all men knew, by happy personal experience, what the love of Jesus is! I have not said much to you unconverted people who are present, but I have often thought that when we are preaching about Christ, even if we do not say much directly to you, the subject itself speaks to you. It is like spreading a dinner where there are hungry people near. You have only to say to such persons, “You are welcome to all there is on the table,” and there is no need of a sermon, or any eloquence. Their mouths begin to water while you are laying the cloth, and the sight of the provisions makes them begin to eat as soon as you say, “Come along.” What big slices they take! Well, poor starving souls, here is the great gospel feast—may your mouths water for a taste of it! All I have to say is—

*“Come and welcome, sinner, come.”*

Come and taste the great love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. May His gracious Spirit bring you, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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