

“THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED”
NO. 1539

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MAY 23, 1880,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“The disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also
leaned on his breast at supper.”
John 21:20.*

OUR Lord loved all His disciples—“Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” He said to all the apostles, “I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his Lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.” And yet within that circle of love there was an innermost place in which the beloved John was favored to dwell, upon the mountain of the Savior’s love there was a knoll, a little higher than the rest of the mount, and there John was made to stand, nearest to his Lord. Let us not, because John was specially loved, think less, even in the slightest degree, of the love which Jesus Christ gave forth to the rest of His chosen.

I take it, brethren, that those who display an extraordinary love to one are all the more capable of great affection to many, and therefore, because Jesus loved John most, I have an enhanced estimate of His love to the other disciples. It is not for a moment to be supposed that any one suffered from His supreme friendship for John. John was raised, and they were not lowered, but raised with him. All believers are the dear objects of the Savior’s choice, the purchase of His blood, His portion and inheritance, the jewels of His crown.

If in John’s case one is greater in love than another, yet all are eminently great, and therefore if it should so happen that you dare not hope to reach the height of John, and cannot look to be distinguished above others as “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” yet be very thankful to be among the brotherhood who can each say, “He loved me, and gave Himself for me.”

If you have not attained unto the first three, be happy to belong to the host of those who follow the Son of David. It is a matchless privilege, and an unspeakable honor, to enjoy the love of Jesus, even if you march among the rank and file of the armies of love. Our Lord’s love to each of us has in it heights immeasurable and depths unfathomable, it passes knowledge.

Yet would I not utter this word of good cheer to make you remain at ease in a low state of grace, far rather would I excite you to rise to the highest point of love, for if already the Lord has loved you with an everlasting love, if already He has chosen you and called you, and kept you and instructed you, and forgiven you, and manifested Himself to you, why should you not hope that another step or two may yet be taken, and that so you may climb to the very highest eminence? Why should you not ere long be styled like Daniel, a “man greatly beloved”? or like John, “that disciple whom Jesus loved”?

To be loved as John was, with a special love, is an innermost form of that same grace with which all believers have been favored. You must not imagine when I try to exhibit some of the lovable traits of John’s character, that I would have you infer that the love of Christ went forth towards John in any other way than according to the law of grace, for whatever there was that was lovable in John it was wrought in him by the grace of God.

Under the law of works John would have been as surely condemned as any of us, and there was nothing legally deserving in John. Grace made him to differ, just as truly as grace separates the vilest sinner from among the ungodly. Though it be granted that there were certain natural characteristics which made him amiable, yet God is the creator of all that is estimable in man, and it was not till the

natural had been by grace transformed and transfigured into the spiritual that these things became the subject of the complacency of Christ Jesus.

Brethren, we do not speak of John today as if he were loved because of his works or stood higher in the heart of Christ on the ground of personal merit, whereof he might glory. He, like all the rest of his brethren, was loved of Jesus because Jesus is all love, and chose to set His heart upon him. Our Lord exercised a sovereignty of love, and chose John for His own name’s sake, and yet at the same time there was created in John much that was a fit object for the love of Christ. The love of Jesus was shed abroad in John’s heart, and thus John himself was made fragrant with delightful odors. It was all of grace, the supposition of anything else is out of place. I look upon this special form of our Lord’s love as one of those “best gifts” which we are bidden earnestly to covet—but a gift most emphatically, and not a wage or a purchasable commodity.

Love is not bought. It never talks of price or claim. Its atmosphere is free favor. “If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would be utterly contemned.” The supremest love is to be sought for, then, after the analogy of grace, as gracious men seek greater grace, and not as legalists chaffer and bargain for reward and desert. If ever we reach the upper chambers of love’s palace love herself must lead us up the stairs, yea, and be to our willing feet the staircase itself. O for the help of the Holy Spirit while we speak upon such a theme.

I. And now, to come nearer to the text, first, dear friends, LET US CONSIDER THE NAME ITSELF—“The disciple whom Jesus loved.”

Our first observation upon it is—*it is a name which John gives to himself*. I think he repeats it five times. No other writer calls John “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” John has thus surnamed himself, and all the early writers recognize him under that title. Do not suspect him, however, of egotism. It is one of the instances in which egotism is quite out of the question. Naturally, you and I would be rather slow to take such a title, even if we felt it belonged to us, because we should be jealous for our repute and be afraid of being thought presumptuous, but with a sweet *naiveté* which makes him quite forget himself, John took the name which he knew most accurately described him, whether others caviled at it or no.

So far from there being any pride in it, it just shows the simplicity of his spirit, the openness, the transparency of his character, and his complete self-forgetfulness. Knowing it to be the truth he does not hesitate to say it, he was sure that Jesus loved him better than others, and though he wondered at it more than anyone else did, yet he so rejoiced in the fact that he could not help publishing it whatever the consequences to himself might be.

Often there is a deal more pride in not witnessing to what God has done for us than in speaking of it. Everything depends upon the spirit which moves us. I have heard a brother with the deepest humility speak with full assurance of the divine love, and while some have thought that he was presumptuous, I have felt within myself that his positive testimony was perfectly consistent with the deepest humility, and that it was his simple modesty which made the man so utterly forget himself as to run the risk of being thought forward and egotistical. He was thinking of how he should glorify God, and the appearance of glorifying himself did not alarm him, for he had forgotten himself in his Master. I wish we could bear to be laughed at as proud for our Lord’s sake. We shall never have John’s name till like John we dare wear it without a blush.

It is a name in which John hides himself. He is very chary of mentioning John. He speaks of “another disciple,” and “that other disciple,” and then of “that disciple whom Jesus loved.” These are the names by which he would travel through his own Gospel “incognito.” We find him out, however, for the disguise is too thin, but still he intends to conceal himself behind his Savior, he wears his Master’s love as a veil, though it turns out to be a veil of light.

He might have called himself if he had chosen, “that disciple who beheld visions of God,” but he prefers to speak of love rather than of prophecy. In the early church we find writings concerning him, in which he is named, “that disciple who leaned on Jesus’ bosom,” and this he mentions in our text. He might have been called “that disciple who wrote one of the gospels,” or “that disciple who knew more of

the very heart of Christ than any other,” but he gives the preference to love. He is not that disciple who did anything, but who received love from Jesus, and he is not that disciple who loved Jesus, but “whom Jesus loved.” John is the man in the silver mask, but we know the man and his communications, and we hear him say, “We have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is love, and he that dwells in love dwells in God and God in Him.”

The name before us is *a name in which John felt himself most at home*. No other title would so well describe him. His own name, “John,” means the “gift of God,” and he was a precious gift from God the Father to His suffering Son, and a great comfort to the Savior during the years of His abode among men. Jesus doubtless counted him to be His Jonathan, His John, His God gift, and He treasured him as such, but John does not so much think of his being of any service to his Lord, as of that which His Lord had been to him. He calls himself “that disciple whom Jesus loved,” because he recognized the delightful obligation which springs out of great love, and wished ever to be under its royal influence. He looked on Jesus’ love as the source and root of everything about himself which was gracious and commendable.

If he had any courage, if he had any faithfulness, if he had any depth of knowledge, it was because Jesus had loved these things into him. All the sweet flowers which bloomed in the garden of his heart were planted there by the hand of Christ’s love, so when he called himself “that disciple whom Jesus loved,” he felt that he had gone to the root and bottom of the matter, and explained the main reason of his being what he was.

This endearing name was very precious to him because it evoked the sunniest memories of all his life. Those short years in which he had been with Jesus must have been looked upon by him in his old age with great transport, as the crown and glory of his earthly existence. I do not wonder that he saw Christ again in Patmos, after having seen Him once in Palestine as he did see Him, for such sights are very apt to repeat themselves. Such sights, I say, for John’s view of his Lord was no ordinary one.

There is at times an echo to sights as well as to sounds, and he who saw the Lord with John’s eagle eye, with his deep-seated inner eye, was the likeliest man in all the world to see Him over again in vision as he did see Him amid the rocks of the Aegean Sea. All the memories of the best part of his life were awakened by the name which he wore, and by its power he often renewed that intimate communion with the living Christ which had lived on during the horrors of the crucifixion, and lasted to the end of his days. That charming name set all the bells of his soul a-ringing, does it not sound right musically—“The disciple whom Jesus loved.”

That name was a powerful spring of action to him as long as he lived. How could he be false to Him who had loved him so? How could he refuse to bear witness to the Gospel of the Savior who had loved him so? What leagues of journeying could be too long for the feet of that disciple whom Jesus loved? What mobs of cruel men could cow the heart of the disciple whom Jesus loved? What form of banishment or death could dismay him whom Jesus loved? No, henceforth in the power of that name John becomes bold and faithful, and he serves his loving Friend with all his heart.

I say, then, that this title must have been very dear to John, because he felt himself most at home in it, the secret springs of his nature were touched by it, he felt his whole self, heart, soul, mind, memory, all comprehended within the compass of the words, “The disciple whom Jesus loved.”

It was a name which was never disputed. You do not find anyone complaining of John for thus describing himself. General consent awarded him the title. His brethren did quarrel with him a little when his fond mother, Salome, wanted thrones for her two sons on the right and the left hand of the Messiah, but the love of Jesus to John never caused any ill will among the brethren, nor did John take any undue advantage of it. I believe that the apostles tacitly acknowledged that their Lord was perfectly right in His choice. There was something about John which made his brethren love him, and therefore they did not marvel that their Lord should make him His most intimate friend.

The truly loved one of God generally receives the love of his brethren. ay, and even the love of the ungodly after a sort, for when a man’s ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace

with him. While David walked with God all Israel loved him, and even Saul was forced to cry, “You are more righteous than I.”

John was so loving that he gained love everywhere. We may well be eager after this choice blessing, since it alone of all known treasures excites no envy among the brethren, but the rather makes all the godly rejoice. Inasmuch as saints wish to be greatly loved themselves, they are glad when they meet with those who have obtained that blessing. If we would ourselves smell of myrrh and aloes and cassia, we are glad to meet with those whose garments are already fragrant. You never find John lecturing his brethren, or acting as a lord over God’s heritage, but in all gentleness and lowliness he justified the affection which our Lord manifested toward him.

II. Thus much, then, with regard to the name. Secondly, LET US LOOK AT THE CHARACTER WHICH LAY BELOW IT.

I can only give a miniature of John, it is quite impossible in the few moments of a sermon to draw a full-length portrait, and indeed, I am not artist enough to accomplish it if I should attempt the task. In the character of John we see much that is admirable.

First, let us look at *his personality as an individual*. His was a large and warm heart. Perhaps his main force lies in the intensity of his nature. He is not vehement, but deep and strong. Whatever he did he did right heartily. He was simple-minded, a man in whom there was no guile, there was no division in his nature, he was one and indivisible in all that he felt or did. He did not entertain questions, he was not captious, he was not apt to spy out faults in others, and as to difficulties, mental or otherwise, he seems to have been happily without them.

Having pondered and come to a conclusion, his whole nature moved in solid phalanx with forceful march, whichever way he went, he went altogether, and right resolutely. Some men go two ways, or they tack about, or they go towards their object in an indirect manner, but John steams straight forward, with the fires blazing and the engine working at full speed. His whole soul was engaged in his Lord’s cause, for he was a deep thinker, a silent student, and then a forceful actor. He was not impetuous with the haste of Peter, but yet he was determined and thorough-going, and all on fire with zeal.

He was exceedingly vivid in his beliefs, and believed to the utmost what he had learned of his Lord. Read his Epistle through, and see how many times he says “we know,” “we know,” “we know.” There are no “ifs” about him, he is a deep and strong believer. His heart gives an unfeigned assent and consent.

Withal there was an intense warmth about John. He loved his Lord, he loved his brethren, he loved with a large heart, for he had a grand nature. He loved constantly, and he loved in such a way as to be practically courageous for his Master, for he was a bold man, a true son of thunder. He was ready to go to the front if he was bound to do so, but it is in quite a quiet way and not with a rush and a noise, his is not the dash of a cataract, but the still flow of a deep river.

Putting all together that we know about his personality, we look upon him as a man who was the reverse of your cold, calculating, slow-moving son of diffidence. You know the sort of persons I mean, very good people in their way, but by no means fascinating or much to be imitated. He was quite the reverse of those dried, juiceless brethren who have no human nature in them—men who are somewhere about perfect, for they have not life enough to sin. They do no wrong, for they do nothing at all. I know a few of those delightful people, sharp critics of others and faultless themselves, with this one exception, that they are heartless.

John was a hearty man, a man of brain, but of soul, too—a soul which went out to the tips of his fingers, a man who was permeated with intense but quiet life, a man to be loved. His life was not that of an ice-plant, but of the red rose. He carried summer in his countenance, energy in his manner, steady force in all his movements. He was like that other John of whom he was once a disciple, “a burning and a shining light.” There was warmth as well as light in him. He was intense, sincere, and unselfish by nature, and a fullness of grace came upon him and sanctified these virtues.

Let us now view him *in his relation to his Lord*. The name he takes to himself is “*the disciple whom Jesus loved*.” Jesus loved him as a disciple. What sort of disciples do masters love? You that have ever

been teachers of youth know that if teachers had their choice certain persons would be selected before others. If we teach we love teachable people, such was John. He was a man quick to learn. He was not like Thomas, slow, argumentative, cautious, but having once assured himself that he had a true teacher, he gave himself right up to him, and was willing to receive what he had to reveal.

He was a disciple of a very keen eye, seeing into the soul of his instructor's teaching. His emblem in the early church was the eagle—the eagle which soars, but also the eagle which sees from afar. John saw the spiritual meaning of types and emblems, he did not stop at the outward symbols, as some of the disciples did, but his penetrating soul read into the depths of truth. You can see this both in his Gospel and in his epistles.

He is a spiritually-minded man, he stays not in the letter, but he dives beneath the surface. He pierces through the shell, and reaches the inner teaching. His first master was John the Baptist, and he was so good a disciple that he was the first to leave his teacher. You hint that this did not show that he was a good disciple. Indeed it did, for it was the Baptist's aim to send his followers to Jesus. The Baptist said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world,” and John was so good a follower of the forerunner that he immediately followed the Lord Himself, to whom the forerunner introduced him. This he did without a violent jerk, his progress was natural and even. Paul came to Jesus with a great start and twist, when he was put upon the lines on the road to Damascus, but John glided gently to the Baptist and then from the Baptist to Jesus. He was not obstinate, neither was he weak, but he was teachable, and so he made steady progress in his learning. Such a disciple is one that a teacher is sure to love, and John was therefore “the *disciple* whom Jesus loved.”

He was full of faith to accept what he was taught. He believed it, and he believed it really and thoroughly. He did not believe as some people do, with the finger-ends of their understanding, but he gripped the truth with both hands, laid it up in his heart, and allowed it to flow from that center, and saturate his whole being. He was a believer in his inmost soul, both when he saw the blood and water at the cross and the folded grave clothes at the sepulcher, he saw and believed.

His faith wrought in him a strong and enduring love, for faith works by love. He believed in his Master in a sweetly familiar way, “for there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear.” Such a trustful, confiding disciple is sure to be loved of his teacher.

John had great receptiveness. He drank in what he was taught. He was like Gideon's fleece, ready to be saturated with the dew of heaven. His whole nature absorbed the truth as it is in Jesus. He was not a great talker, I should think he was almost a silent disciple. So little did he say that we have only one saying of his recorded in the Gospels. “Why,” says one, “I remember two or three.” Do you remind me that he asked that he might sit on the right hand of Christ? I have not forgotten that request, but I answer that his mother, Salome, spoke on that occasion. Again, you tell me that at the supper he asked, “Lord, who is it?” Yes, but it was Peter who put that question into his mouth.

The only utterance that I remember in the Gospel which was altogether John's is that at the sea of Tiberius, when he said to Peter, “It is the Lord.” This was a very significant little speech—a recognition of his Lord such as the quick eye of love is sure to make. He who lived nearest to Jesus could best discern Him as He stood upon the shore. “It is the Lord,” is the gladsome cry of love, overjoyed at the sight of its Beloved. It might have served John as his motto—“It is the Lord.” O that we were able amid darkness and tossing to discern the Savior, and rejoice in His presence. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God,” and such was the beloved disciple.

One great trait in John's character as a disciple was his intense love for his Teacher, he not only received the truth, but he received the Master Himself. I take it that the leaning of a man's faults often betrays his heart more than his virtues. It may seem a strange observation to make, but it is true. A true heart may as well be seen in its weakness as in its excellence. What were the weak points about John, as some would say? On one occasion he was intolerant. Certain persons were casting out devils, and he forbade them because they followed not with the disciples. Now, that intolerance, mistaken as it was,

grew out of love to his Lord, he was afraid that these interlopers might set up as rivals to his Lord, and he wanted them to come under the rule of his beloved Jesus.

At another time the Samaritans would not receive them, and he asked his Master if he might call down fire from heaven on them. One does not commend him, but still it was love to Jesus which made him indignant at their ungenerous conduct to their best friend. He felt so indignant that men should not entertain the Savior who had come into the world to bless them that he would even call fire from heaven, it showed his burning love for Jesus.

Even when his mother asked that he and the brother might sit upon thrones at the right hand and the left hand of Christ, it was a deep and thoughtful faith in Jesus which suggested it. His idea of honor and glory was bound up with Jesus. If he gives way to ambition it is an ambition to reign with the despised Galilean. He does not want a throne unless it be at his Leader's side. Moreover, what faith there was in that request! I am not going to justify it, but I am going to say something to moderate your condemnation.

Our Lord was going up to Jerusalem to be spat upon, and to be put to death, and yet John so thoroughly threw himself into his Lord's career that he would gladly share in the fortune of his great Caesar, assured that it must end in His enthronement. He is content, he says, to be baptized with His baptism, and to drink of His cup, he only asks to share with Jesus in all things. As a good writer says, it reminds one of the courage of the Roman who when Rome was in the hands of the enemy purchased a house within the walls, John heroically asks for a throne at the side of one who was about to die on the cross, for he feels sure that He will triumph.

When the cause and kingdom of Christ seemed ready to expire, yet so whole-hearted was John in his faith in God and his love to his beloved Lord that his highest ambition was still to be with Jesus and take shares with Him in all that He would do and be. So, you see, all through he loved his Lord with all his heart, and therefore Jesus Christ loved him, or let me turn it the other way—the Lord loved John, and therefore he loved the Lord Jesus. It is his own explanation of it—“We love Him because He first loved us.”

I must ask you to look at John once more, *as an instructed person*. He was a beloved disciple, and remained a disciple, but he grew to know more and more, and in that capacity I would say of him that doubtless our Lord Jesus loved him because of the tenderness which was produced by grace out of his natural warmth. How tender he was to Peter, after that apostle's grievous fall, for early in the morning John goes with him to the sepulcher. He is the man who restored the backslider. He was so tender that our Lord did not say to John, “Feed my lambs,” for He knew he would be sure to do it, and He did not even say to him, “Feed my sheep,” as He did to Peter—He knew that John would do so from the instincts of his loving nature.

He was a man who under the tutorship of Christ grew, moreover, to be very spiritual and very deep. The words he uses in his epistles are mostly monosyllables, but what mighty meanings they contain. If we may compare one inspired writer with another, I should say that no other evangelist is at all comparable to him in depth. The other evangelists give us Christ's miracles, and certain of His sermons, but His profound discourses, and His matchless prayer, are reserved for that disciple whom Jesus loved. Where the deep things of God are concerned there is John, with sublime simplicity of utterance, declaring unto us the things which he has tasted and handled.

Of all the disciples John was most Christlike. Like will to like. Jesus loved John for what He saw of Himself in him, created by His grace. Thus I think you will see that, without supposing John to have possessed any merit, there were points in his personal character, in his character as a disciple, and in his character as an educated, spiritual man, which justified our Savior in making him the object of His most intimate affection.

III. Very briefly, in the third place, LET US REVIEW THE LIFE WHICH GREW OUT OF THIS EXTRAORDINARY LOVE OF CHRIST.

What was the life of John? First, it was a life of *intimate communion*. John was wherever Christ was. Other disciples are away, but Peter and James and John are present. When all the disciples sit at the table, even Peter is not nearest to the Lord Jesus, but John leans his head upon His bosom. Their intercourse was very near and dear. Jesus and John were David and Jonathan over again. If you are a man greatly beloved you will live in Jesus, your fellowship will be with Him from day to day.

John's was a life of *special instruction*. He was taught things which no others knew, for they could not bear them. At the latter end of his life he was favored with visions such as even Paul himself, though not a whit behind the chief of the apostles, had never seen. Because of the greatness of his Lord's love to him He showed him future things, and lifted up the veil so that he might see the kingdom and the glory. They shall see most who love most; they shall be taught most who most completely give up their hearts to the doctrine.

John henceforth became a man in whose life there was amazing depth. If he did not say much as a rule while his Lord was with him, he was taking it all in for future use. He lived an inner life. He was a son of thunder, and could boldly thunder out the truth, because, as a thundercloud is charged with electricity, so had he gathered up the mysterious force of his Lord's life, love, and truth. When he did break out there was a voice like the voice of God in him, a deep, mysterious, overwhelming power of God was about him.

What a flash of lightning is the Apocalypse! What awful thunders sleep within the vials and the trumpets! His was a life of divine power because of the great fire which burned within, his was not the flash of crackling thorns beneath a pot, but the glow of coals in a furnace when the whole mass is molten into a white heat. John is the ruby among the twelve, he shines with a warm brilliance reflecting the love which Jesus lavished on him.

Hence his life was one of *special usefulness*. He was entrusted with choice commissions involving high honor. The Lord gave him to do a work of the most tender and delicate kind, which I am afraid He could not commit to some of us. As the Redeemer hung upon the tree dying, He saw His mother standing in the throng, and He did not commit her to Peter, but to John. Peter would have been glad of the commission, I am sure, and so would Thomas, and so would James, but the Lord said to John, “Behold your mother!” and to His mother, “Woman, behold your son!” And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.

So modest, so retiring, I was going to say, so gentlemanly, was John that he was the man to take charge of a broken-hearted mother. Said I wrong that he was a true gentleman? Divide the word, and surely he was the gentlest of men. John has a delicate air and considerate manner, needful to the care of an honored woman. Peter is good, but he is rough, Thomas is kind, but cold, John is tender and affectionate. When you love Jesus much, He will trust His mother to you, I mean His church and the poorest people in it, such as widows and orphans, and poor ministers. He will trust them to you because He loves you much. He will not put everybody into that office. Some of His people are very hard and stony of heart, and fitter to be tax-collectors than distributors of alms. They would make capital officers in an army, but not nurses in a hospital. If you love Jesus much you shall have many delicate offices to perform which shall be to you proofs of your Lord's trust in you, and renewed tokens of His love.

John's life was, moreover, one of *extraordinary heavenliness*. They call him John the Divine, and he was so. His eagle wings bore him aloft into the heavenly places, and there he beheld the glory of the Lord. Whether in Jerusalem or in Antioch, in Ephesus or in Patmos, his conversation was in heaven. The Lord's-day found him in the spirit, waiting for Him that comes with clouds—so waiting that He who is the Alpha and Omega hastened to reveal Himself to him. It was the love of his Lord which had thus prepared him for visions of the glory.

Had not that love so enkindled his own love as to hold him faithfully at the cross all through the agony, he might never have been able to gaze upon the throne. He had lovingly followed Him who had been pointed out to him as the “Lamb of God,” and therefore he was made fit to see Him as the Lamb in the midst of the throne, adored of angels and redeemed saints, whose harps and viols are engrossed with

His praise. O that we too, could be freed from the grossness of earth, and borne aloft into the purer atmosphere of spiritual and heavenly things.

IV. We close by saying, very briefly, LET US LEARN LESSONS FOR OURSELVES from that disciple whom Jesus loved. May the Holy Spirit speak them to our inmost hearts.

First, I speak to those of you who are still young. If you wish to be “the disciple whom Jesus loved” *begin soon*. I suppose that John was between twenty and twenty-five when he was converted, at any rate, he was quite a young man. All the representations of him which have been handed down to us, though I attach no great value to them, yet unite in the fact of his youth. Youthful piety has the most profitable opportunity of becoming eminent piety. If you begin soon to walk with Christ you will improve your pace and the habit will grow upon you. He who is only made a Christian in the last few years of his life will scarcely reach to the first and highest degree, for lack of time, and from the hampering influence of old habits, but you who begin soon are planted in good soil, with a sunny aspect, and should come to maturity. Soldiers who enlist early under the banner of our David have hope of becoming veterans, and attaining to the first three.

Next, if we would be like John in being loved by Christ, let us *give our heart's best thoughts to spiritual things*. Brethren and sisters, do not stop in the outward ordinance, but plunge into its inner sense. Never allow your soul, on the Lord's-day for instance, to be thankful and happy merely because you have been to the place of worship. Ask yourself, “Did I worship? Did my soul commune with God?” In the use of the two ordinances of baptism and the supper, content not yourself with the shell, but seek to get at the kernel of their inner meaning. Rest not unless the Spirit of God Himself dwell within you. Recollect that the letter kills, it is the spirit that gives life. The Lord Jesus Christ takes no delight in those who are fond of broad phylacteries, and multiplied sacraments, and holy performances, and superstitious observances. The Father seeks those to worship Him who worship Him in spirit and in truth. Be spiritual, and you are among those who are likely to be men greatly beloved.

Next to that, *cherish a holy warmth*. Do not repress your emotions and freeze your souls. You know the class of brethren who are gifted with refrigerating power. When you shake hands with them, you would think that you had hold of a fish, a chill goes to your very soul. Listen to them sing. No, you cannot hear them! Sit in the next pew, and you will never hear the gentle hiss or mutter which they call singing. Out in their shops they could be heard a quarter of a mile off, but if they pray in the meeting, you must strain your ears.

They do all Christian service as if they were working by the day for a bad master and at scanty wages, when they get into the world they work by the piece as if for dear life. Such brethren cannot be affectionate. They never encourage a young man, for they are afraid that their weighty commendation might exalt him above measure. A little encouragement would help the struggling youth mightily, but they have none to offer.

They calculate and reckon and move prudently, but anything like a brave trust in God they set down as rashness and folly. God grant us plenty of rashness, I say, for what men think imprudence is about the grandest thing under heaven. Enthusiasm is a feeling which these refrigerators do not indulge. Their chant is, “As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen,” but anything like a dash for Christ and a rush for souls they do not understand.

Mark this, if you trace such brethren home, you will find that they have little joy themselves and make very little joy for others. They are never quite certain that they are saved, and if they are not sure of it we may readily guess that other people are not. They spend in anxious thought the strength which ought to have gone in hearty love. They were born at the North Pole, and live amid perpetual frost, all the furs of Hudson's Bay could not warm them. About them you see none of the rich tropical flowers which bedeck the heart upon which the Sun of Righteousness shines with perpendicular beams.

These chilly mortals have never traversed the sunny regions of heavenly love where the spices of holy delight load all the air, and apples of gold are everywhere within the reach of glowing hearts. The Lord bring us there! Jesus Christ loves warm people, He never shines on an iceberg except to melt it.

His own life is so full of love that its holy fire kindles the like flame in others. and thus He has fellowship with those whose hearts burn within them. The fitness for love is love. To enjoy the love of Jesus we must overflow with love. Pray for earnest, eager, intense affection. Lay your hearts among the coals of juniper till they melt and glow.

Dear brother, if you want to be the man that Jesus loves, cultivate strong affection and *let your nature be tender and kind*. The man who is habitually cross, and frequently angry, cannot walk with God. A man of a quick, hot temper who never tries to check it, or in whom there is a malicious remembrance of injuries, like a fire smoldering amidst the embers, cannot be the companion and friend of Jesus, whose spirit is of an opposite character. A pitiful, compassionate, unselfish, generous heart is that which our Lord approves.

Forgive your fellow as if you never had anything to forgive. When brethren injure you, hope that they have made a mistake, or else feel that if they knew you better they would treat you worse. Be of such a mind towards them that you will neither give nor take offense. Be willing to lay down, not only your comfort, but even your life for the brethren. Live in the joy of others, even as saints do in heaven. Love others so as to forget your own sorrows. So shall you become a man greatly beloved.

Last of all, may the Spirit of God help you to *rise to heavenliness*. Do not be miserable money-grubbers or sordid earthworms, do not be pleasure hunters and novelty seekers, do not set your affection upon these children’s toys, which will be so soon broken. Be you no more children, but men of God.

Oh to find your joy in Christ, your wealth in Christ, your honor in Christ, your everything in Christ—this is peace. To be in the world but not to be of it, to linger here as if you were an angel sent from heaven to dwell for a while among the sons of men, to tell them of heaven, and point them the way—this is to abide in Christ’s love. To be always ready to fly, to stand on tiptoe, waiting for the heavenward call, to expect to hear the trumpet ring out its clarion note, the trumpet of the coming of your Lord—this is to have fellowship with Christ.

Sit loose, I pray you, by this world, get a tighter grip of the world to come—so shall Jesus’ love be shed abroad within you. Throw your anchor upward, into the placid sea of divine love, and not like the seamen, downward, into a troubled ocean. Anchor yourselves to the eternal throne, and never be divided even in thought from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. May it be my privilege and yours, brothers and sisters, to lean these heads of ours on Jesus’ bosom, till the day break and the shadows flee away. Amen and Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 JOHN 2

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—810, 784, 798

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