LOVE'S TRANSFORMATIONS—A COMMUNION MEDITATION

NO. 1871

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON SEPTEMBER 4, 1881

"If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father."
John 14:28

THE loving Jesus saw a shade of sadness fall upon the faces of the twelve while He talked to them of His departure. Though He was Himself to die, with His usual self-forgetfulness, He only thought of them, and He desired to comfort them—to comfort them about the present sorrow of His departure. See how skillfully, how wisely, He drew upon their love for their comfort.

The most common and usual source of comfort is Christ's love to us, but in this instance the most applicable and the most influential source of comfort was their love to Him. He said, therefore, to them, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father." It was well and wisely spoken, for He touched them upon a point in which they were very tender—if anything could move them to comfort, it would be His appeal to their loyal love.

He had appealed to that before, when He said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments," but now, in softer, sweeter, tenderer tones, He seems to say, "If ye love me, cease your sorrow, and begin to rejoice."

The Lord may give *us* drink from that same spring. It is a lower spring compared with the upper spring of His own sweet love, but He may cause it to flow most preciously, so that when we are not bold enough to drink of the higher stream, we may taste of this. If we are able to say, "Thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee," we may be cheered by that truth.

"So surely as you do love Me," says Christ, "you will rejoice rather than sorrow, because I said, I go unto My Father." Oh, what a blessed Master we serve, who quotes our love, not to blame us for its feebleness, but to draw a happy inference from it. So much does He desire our peace, our restfulness in His own dear self, that even the love we give to Him, He gives back to us and bids us find comfort in it.

Let that stand as a preface. And now I shall deal with the text by way of making some three or four observations upon it.

I. And the first is this—IT WILL BE MUCH FOR OUR COMFORT TO TRY TO SEE THINGS IN CHRIST'S LIGHT.

Notice the expression, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father."

Christ had told them that He was about to die. He had said in very plain language on a former occasion, "The Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him."

But now He looks at the matter in another light. His present view of it is, "I go unto the Father." Their view of it was, "Jesus is to die." His view of it was, "I go unto my Father." Oh, how often our hearts would grow happy if we could but see things in Christ's light. Let us try to do so.

For, here observe, that *Christ sees through things*. You and I look *at* them, and we see Pilate, Herod, the judgment seat, the scourge, the cross, the spear, the sepulchre—but Jesus looks *through* them, and He sees the Father's throne and Himself exalted upon it. Could we not sometimes try to see affairs in Christ's light by looking through them?

Come, brother, that present affliction which seems not to be joyous but grievous, nevertheless, afterward, yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Can you not look at the "afterward," and thus discern the end of the Lord? Your present estate is tossed about and troubled, for you are on a stormy sea, but you are being tossed towards the port, and driven, even by the storm towards your desired haven.

Can you not see through matters as Jesus did? Why dwell always on this life? Can you not see what it leads to? "The way may be rough, but it cannot be long." And then comes an eternity of joy. Can you not spy out this? Your Lord did so, for though His passage into glory was infinitely rougher than yours—though He had to swim through seas of blood, and breast the breakers of hell itself in His death-pangs—yet He looked beyond all, and said, "I go unto the Father." See things in Christ's light. See the end as well as the beginning and the middle—and you will be comforted!

Do you not see, too, that the light in which Christ sees things is such that *He notices the bearing of things*? He says, in effect, "If you could see My death as I see it—as a going unto the Father—you would rejoice." He sees the ultimate result and bearing of things. Oh, if we could always do the same, and perceive what will come of our present sorrow, and what it tends to, and what God means to bring out of it all, then we should not so much see the fire as the pure ingot that comes forth of it!

Then we should not so much see the ploughing, and the scattering of the seed to be buried beneath frost and snow, but we should hear the shouts of harvest, and see the yellow sheaves gathered into the garner. Oh, to see providences in Christ's light!

But I do not mean to dwell upon this. I only want to throw out the thought, that every troubled one may now think of his own case as Christ would think of it. If you have a sorrow, how would Jesus deal with this sorrow if it were His own? If you are just now in darkness, what would be Christ's outlook from the window of faith? What would He see as coming out of this affliction?

There is no better rule for Christian conduct than, "What would Jesus do?" I was much struck when I saw that question hanging up in our Orphanage girls' school—"What would Jesus do?" Friend, this is what you should do. What does Jesus think about trial?—for according to the measure of your capacity, my brother, that is what you should think of it. Try this holy rule and you will find the major part of your sorrows transformed into joys.

A clear understanding of the nature of our trial would lead us to glory in tribulation. All that has to do with Jesus is joyous when seen in His light! If you understood His passion, you would see His glory. If you understood His tomb, you would see His resurrection. If you understood His death, you would see His throne.

II. Our second observation is this—OUR LOVE OUGHT TO GO TOWARDS OUR LORD'S PERSON. "If ye loved *me*, ye would rejoice,." Come, my dear friends, gather up your thoughts a minute while I remind you that the chiefest love that we have should go to Jesus Christ Himself—not so much to His salvation, as to Himself, should our hearts fly. "If ye loved *me*, ye would rejoice,." We do well to love Christ's house, and His day, and His Book, and His church, and His service, and His blood, and His throne—but we must, above all these things, love His person.

That is the tender point—"we love *Him*," and other things in Him. We love His church for His sake, His truth because it is His truth, His cross because He bore it for us, and His salvation because purchased by His blood. I counsel you to pull up the sluices of your love, and let the full tide flow towards Jesus. Love HIM.

For, first, He is the source of all benefits. Therefore, in loving Him you value the benefits, but you trace them to their fountainhead. Should we love the gift better than the giver? Should the wife love her jewels better than the beloved one who gave them? It must not be so. Love the very person of Jesus—the God, the man, Emmanuel, God with us. Realize Him as a distinct existence. Let Him stand before you now "with scars of honor in His flesh, and triumph in His eyes" as we sang just now. Love Him as the source of your hope, your pardon, your life, your future glory.

Loving Him we learn to prize all His gifts the more, for he that loves the giver values the smallest gift for the giver's sake. Your love to the person of Jesus will not make you think less of the benefits which He bestows, but infinitely more. Shoot at the center of the target. Love Him, and loving Him, you will value all that He gives.

Loving Jesus, we have Him for our own, and that is a great blessing. A man may love gold and not have it. A man may love fame and not have it. But he that loves Christ has Christ, for certainly there was never yet a hand of love stretched out to embrace Him unlawfully. He is the property of all who lay hold of Him with their hearts.

Love Him, and then you will sympathize with Him. His work will arouse your greatest interest. When His cause seems to decline, you will grieve with Him. And when He wins the day, you will shout the victory with Him. Love Him and you will love the souls of men. Love Jesus, and you will seek to bring sinners to Him.

Nothing can do you so much good and fit you so well for His service as to love Himself. Love Him, and you will love His people, for never heart did love Christ and hate His church. He that loves the Head loves the members. "Everyone that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." We know that we love Jesus when we love the brethren.

Love Christ, and you will have a possession which will last forever, for other things expire, but love never fails. "Whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease." But he that loves, possesses a coin that is current in the skies. He shall go on to love forever. When the sun shall be darkened, and the stars shall fall from heaven, like withered leaves, he that loves Jesus shall still go on to love, and find in that love his heaven.

Remember, if you love the Son, the Father will love you. That is a precious word of His which you will find in the sixteenth chapter of John, at the twenty-seventh verse. There is a common object of love between the believer and the Father. When you glorify Christ, the Father says "Amen" to what you do. There is no lover of the Christ equal to the Father. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." Therefore love the Son, and yield all honor to Him, even as the Father does.

If you love Him you may well do so. It is necessary—absolutely necessary—that you should love your own Lord, for I will tell you a secret thing, only to be whispered in the believing ear—you are married to Him—and what is the marriage state without love? What, then, would the church be to Christ if she loved Him not?

What a wretched farce this union would be if there were no love between the soul and Christ to whom it is united! You are a member of His body—shall not the hand love the Head? Shall not the foot love the Head? God forbid that we should be without love to Jesus Christ—love to His own altogether lovely self. May God the Holy Spirit work in us abundantly to love Jesus, who tenderly says, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice!"

III. My third observation is that SOMETIMES OUR SORROWS PUT A QUESTION ON OUR LOVE.

Do you not notice that it was because they were very sorrowful, not seeing things in the Master's light, that Jesus said, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice"? Let us try tonight to check the sorrow which may be in our bosoms at this hour, since it may cast an "if" upon our love to Christ.

Notice that if sorrow about the loss of an earthly thing eats into your heart, it puts an "if" upon your love to Christ. Many are the cries of woe—"Alas, I have lost my property. I have lost the old house in which my fathers lived. I have lost my situation. I have lost my dearest friend!" Is it therefore true that because of this loss, you have no joy left?

Have you lost your Savior? I thought you called Him your Best-Beloved, and you said that He was your all—is He also gone? Did I not hear you say, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee"? Is that true? Oh, over-burdened heart! Oh, heavy spirit! Do you love Jesus? Then why disconsolate? An "if" comes up when we think of your despair.

So, too, when we too much repine under personal affliction, a question is suggested. You may be ill tonight, or you may be fearing that an illness is coming. Or you may be in pain or weakness. Because you fear that consumption is upon you, your heart is very heavy. Truly, it is a sad thing to be diseased, but who sent you this? Whose will is it that it should be so? Who is the Lord of the house?

Is not the grief your Lord's will, your Savior's will? You say you love Him, and yet you will not let Him have His way, and are in a pet with Him, and would dispute His love in sending this affliction! Is that so, my brother? Does not that murmuring of yours put an "if" of question upon your love to His blessed person?

You say, too, that you have been trusting Him, and yet you have fallen into difficulties and straits. You do not know which way to turn, and you suspect that His providence is not wise. Do you think so? If you loved Him as you should, would you think so? Is there not an "if" somewhere? I do not mean an "if" about your loving Him, but about your loving Him as you ought. Methinks if you loved Him as He deserves, you would say, "The King can do no wrong. My King is kind, wise, loving. I yield everything into His blessed hands."

And so your sorrow is occasioned by the fear of death! You go burdened every day about death, do you? That is a poor compliment to the Well-Beloved. I thought you loved Him! Love Him—and not wish to see His face? It is a dark passage, is it? Oh, if the way were darker still, since He is on the other side, let us pass through it with a song. To be with Him where He is—are you reluctant? Reluctant to behold His face? Reluctant to be in His bosom forever? Is there not an "if" somewhere?

No, your grief is not about your death—it is about those that have died whom you loved. You cannot forgive God for taking away those you loved so well. Who has them, friend? Who has them? I will tell you. It is One who, when He was here, said, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."

He prayed for them. He died for them. And now He has His own, and you are displeased! Do you stand fretting because Christ has His own? What! Are you pettish because what He lent you for a while He has taken back? Were not your dear ones always more His than yours? Do you love Him, then, and grudge your child, your babe to Jesus?

Do you grudge your mother, your brother, your wife, your husband to Him that bought them with His blood? Oh, I say again, it puts an "if" upon your love—not on the existence of it, but on the degree of it. If you loved Him, you would rejoice that He sees of the travail of His soul, and has His saints with Him in glory.

IV. That brings me to the closing remark, which contains the gist of the text. And all the rest is meant to lead up to it, namely, this—that OUR LOVE TO OUR DIVINE LORD OUGHT TO BE SUCH THAT HIS EXALTATION, THOUGH IT SHOULD BE OUR LOSS, SHOULD, NEVERTHELESS, GIVE US UNFEIGNED DELIGHT.

I will put this very simply before you. There is a daughter of yours in Christ, and she is fading away by consumption. She is very happy in the Lord, and full of joyful expectation. She is about to die, and you are all round the bed. You, her dear mother, stand there weeping most of all. Now, your dear girl shall give you an explanation of my text.

She says, "Mother, do you not know that I shall soon be with the angels, and shall see the face of God, without fault? If you loved me, mother, ye would rejoice, to think that I shall be away from all this weakness and this pain. If you love me, you will be glad to think that your child shall be in glory."

Your girl's sweet words shall tell you what Jesus meant. He meant, "If you loved me very much—if you loved *Me*—not merely My presence and the comforts that I bring you, and the charm with which I invest your earthly life—but if ye loved *Me*, you would say, 'Blessed Lord, we readily deny ourselves Your company and all the joy it brings, because it is better for You to be gone to the Father. It is more glorious for You to be in heaven than here, and therefore we rejoice in Your exaltation.'"

You see how it was with those disciples. I need not enlarge upon their case. When Jesus had died and risen again—and had gone away from His disciples, He took upon Himself the glory which He had

laid aside. The glory which He had with God before the world was, He reassumed at the time when He entered heaven.

Then, too, as the God-Man, He was invested with a new splendor. The Father said, "Let all the angels of God worship him," and they adored Him. New songs went up from every golden street, and all heaven rang with, "Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna!" as Christ ascended to His throne. To the throne He ascends, and there He sits, King and Priest forever, enthroned until His enemies are made His footstool.

No more the bloody sweat—no more the cruel spear—no more the dark and lonesome tomb. He is exalted above all exaltation, higher than the kings of the earth, far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named.

We ought to be glad of this—exceeding glad. These disciples were bound to be glad if they loved Christ, for though they could no more enjoy His company, could not sit at the table with Him, could not walk through the streets with Him any more, yet it was good *for Him* to be gone to glory, and therefore they were constrained to rejoice.

I want, in conclusion, to draw one or two parallel cases which may be practically applicable to yourselves.

Suppose, beloved, that it should always be for Christ's glory to leave you in the dark, would you not rejoice to have it so? A little while ago it was so with me. A few years ago I remember preaching to you from the text, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," and I think that if ever soul of mortal man did know the bitter meaning of that cry I did.

I preached, hearing the clanking of my own fetters while I spoke to you. It was sad work. That night, ere I went home, I knew the reason. There came into the vestry a man as nearly insane as man could be. Despair hung like a cloud over his countenance, and as he took my hand, he said, "I have never met a man before that seemed to know where I am. Talk with me."

I saw him the next day, and several days, and saved him, by God's help, from self-destruction. Then did I rejoice because I saw that Christ was glorified. I would lose my Master's company, dark as the day would be to me without it—lose it, ay, by the month together—if it would make Him glorious in the heart of one poor downcast man, or bring a single sinner to His feet.

Be willing to say the same, brethren. Love Christ, and be willing for Him to give you the cold shoulder instead of the kiss of His lips, if He might be more glorified. God bring us to reach that state of self-denial, to be willing to forego that greatest luxury of heaven, for which angels themselves do pine—the presence of the Lord—if thereby Jesus may be the better served.

Well, now, suppose that you are going to be laid aside, and afflicted, and troubled, and it should be God's intent that by this you should become more useful and more fitted for His service? If you love Him, you will rejoice at this. You will accept chastisement with thankfulness, and say, "Lay on the stripes! Multiply the pains! Only fashion me so that I can glorify You! Make no account of anything else but this—that You may be exalted in my mortal body whether I live or whether I die!"

It is possible, dear friend, that you are going to be eclipsed by one who has a brighter light than any God has yet given you. None of us like this. Somebody is coming forward who will preach better than you. That Sunday school teacher is going to teach better than you. Somebody near you will display more grace and more gifts than you. What then?

If you love Jesus you will rejoice that it should be so. Do you recollect how Paul did. There were some who preached Christ out of contention and ill-will, and wanted to get the better of Paul. And have their names cried up above the apostle's. "Ah!" says Paul, "so long as Christ is preached I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." Well spoken, Paul!

I like the valor of the soldier who helped to fill the ditch with his dead body that his captain might march to victory. Throw yourselves into oblivion that Jesus may triumph. It were a small sacrifice for all the church to die a martyr's death if Jesus were but raised one inch the higher among men. Let us exhibit the self-denying spirit which is born of love. "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father."

Suppose that it should also happen that some of you are going to be deprived of all the privileges of hearing the Gospel, because you are going away to a foreign land. You are extremely sorry, but suppose that Jesus means to make use of you to advance His glory among the heathen—by naming His name where it was never known before. Then you may rejoice in banishment, rejoice to deny yourselves Gospel privileges, rejoice to be scattered far and wide by mountain, and stream, and sea, so that you might bring forth a harvest to His glory.

Brethren, if you should be sinking lower and lower in your own esteem, be not sorry for it. If Christ is rising higher and higher in your esteem, count it all gain. Sink, O self, down to death, and the abyss. Sink, sink, till there is nothing left of you! Go down, pride, self-conceit, self-trust, self-seeking! Go even though your going should cause despondency, so long as Christ is crowned! Sink, sink, soul, if Jesus rises! If you can trust Him better, love Him better, and admire Him more, so let it be.

As you come to His table, say in your hearts, "Lord, make me glad, or make me sad, so long as You are exalted! Lord, let me have Your presence, or even let me be without it, so long us You are exalted and extolled!"

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 14 (PARTS)

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—313, 317, 786

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. 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.