

DECLENSION FROM FIRST LOVE

NO. 217

A SERMON
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 AT THE NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK

“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.”
Revelation 2:4

IT is a great thing to have as much said in our commendation as was said concerning the church at Ephesus. Just read what “Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness,” said of them—“I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou cast not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.”

Oh, my dear brothers and sisters, we may feel devoutly thankful if we can humbly, but honestly say, that this commendation applies to us. Happy the man whose works are known and accepted of Christ. He is no idle Christian, he has practical godliness. He seeks by works of piety to obey God’s whole law, by works of charity to manifest his love to the brotherhood, and by works of devotion to show his attachment to the cause of his Master.

“I know thy works.” Alas! some of you cannot get so far as that. Jesus Christ Himself can bear no witness to your works—for you have not done any. You are Christians by profession, but you are not Christians as to your practice. I say again, happy is that man to whom Christ can say, “I know thy works.” It is a commendation worth a world to have as much as that said of us.

But further, Christ said, “and thy labour.” This is more still. Many Christians have works, but only few Christians have labor. There were many preachers in Whitefield’s day that had works, but Whitefield had labor. He toiled and travailed for souls. He was “in labours more abundant.” Many were they in the apostle’s days who did works for Christ, but pre-eminently the apostle Paul did labor for souls.

It is not merely work—it is anxious work—it is casting forth the whole strength and exercising all the energies for Christ. Could the Lord Jesus say as much as that of you—“I know thy labour”? No. He might say, “I know thy loitering. I know thy laziness. I know thy shirking of the work. I know thy boasting of what little you do. I know your ambition to be thought something of, when you are nothing.” But ah, friends, it is more than most of us dare to hope that Christ could say, “I know thy labour.”

And further, Christ says “I know thy patience.” Now there be some that labor and they do it well. But what does hinder them? They only labor for a little season, and then they cease to work and begin to faint. But this church had labored on for many years. It had thrown out all its energies—not in some spasmodic effort, but in a continual strain and unabated zeal for the glory of God.

“I know thy patience.” I say again, beloved, I tremble to think how few out of this congregation could win such praise as this. “I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil.” The thorough hatred which the church had of evil doctrine, of evil practice, and its corresponding intense love for the pure truth and pure practice—in that I trust some of us can bear a part.

“And thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.” Here, too, I think some of us may hope to be clear. I know the difference between truth and error. Arminianism will never go down with us. The doctrine of men will not suit our taste. The husks, the bran, and the chaff, are not things that we can feed upon. And when we listen to those who preach

another Gospel, a holy anger burns within us, for we love the truth as it is in Jesus, and nothing but that will satisfy us.

“And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name’s sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted.” They had borne persecutions, difficulties, hardships, embarrassments, and discouragements, yet had they never flagged, but always continued faithful.

Who among us here present could lay claim to so much praise as this? What Sunday school teacher have I here who could say, “I have laboured, and I have borne, and have had patience, and have not fainted.” Ah, dear friends, if you can say it, it is more than I can. Often have I been ready to faint in the Master’s work. And though I trust I have not been tired of it, yet there has sometimes been a longing to get from the work to the reward, and to go from the service of God, before I had fulfilled, as a hireling, my day. I am afraid we have not enough of patience, enough of labor, and enough of good works, to get even as much as this said of us.

But it is in our text, I fear, the mass of us must find our character. “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.” There may be a preacher here present. Did you ever hear of a minister who had to preach his own funeral sermon? What a labor that must have been, to feel that he had been condemned to die, and must preach against himself and condemn himself!

I stand here tonight, not in that capacity, but in one somewhat similar. I feel that I who preach shall this night condemn myself. And my prayer before I entered this pulpit was that I might fearlessly discharge my duty, that I might deal honestly with my own heart, and that I might preach, knowing myself to be the chief culprit, and you each in your own measure have offended in this respect, even though none of you so grievously as I have done. I pray that God the Holy Spirit, through His renewings, may apply the Word, not merely to your hearts, but to mine—that I may return to my first love and that you may return with me.

In the first place, *what was our first love?* Secondly, *how did we lose it?* And thirdly, *let me exhort you to get it again.*

I. First, WHAT WAS OUR FIRST LOVE?

Oh, let us go back—it is not many years with some of us. We are but youngsters in God’s ways and it is not so long with many of you that you will have very great difficulty in reckoning it. Then if you are Christians, those days were so happy that your memory will never forget them, and therefore, you can easily return to that first bright spot in your history.

Oh, what love was that which I had to my Savior the first time He forgave my sins. I remember it. You remember each for yourselves, I dare say, that happy hour when the Lord appeared to us, bleeding on His cross—when He seemed to say, and did say in our hearts, “I am your salvation. I have blotted out like a cloud your iniquities and like a thick cloud your sins.”

Oh, how I loved Him! Passing all loves except His own was that love which I felt for Him then. If beside the door of the place in which I met with Him there had been a stake of blazing faggots, I would have stood upon them without chains, glad to give my flesh, and blood, and bones, to be ashes that should testify my love to Him.

Had He asked me then to give all my substance to the poor, I would have given all and thought myself to be amazingly rich in having beggared myself for His name’s sake. Had He commanded me then to preach in the midst of all His foes, I could have said,

*“There’s not a lamb amongst Thy flock
I would disdain to feed,
There’s not a foe before whose face
I’d fear Thy cause to plead.”*

I could realize then the language of Rutherford, when he said, being full of love to Christ, once upon a time, in the dungeon of Aberdeen—“Oh, my Lord, if there were a broad hell betwixt me and Thee, if I

could not get at Thee except by wading through it, I would not think twice but I would plunge through it all, if I might embrace Thee and call Thee mine.”

Now, it is that first love that you and I must confess I am afraid we have in a measure lost. Let us just see whether we have it. When we first loved the Savior, how earnest we were. There was not a single thing in the Bible that we did not think most precious. There was not one command of His that we did not think to be like fine gold and choice silver.

Never were the doors of His house open without our being there. If there were a prayer meeting at any hour in the day we were there. Some said of us that we had no patience, we would do too much and expose our bodies too frequently—but we never thought of that. “Do yourself no harm,” was spoken in our ears. But we could have done anything then.

Why there are some of you who cannot walk to the Music Hall on a morning—it is too far. When you first joined the church, you would have walked twice as far. There are some of you who cannot be at the prayer meeting—business will not permit. Yet when you were first baptized, there was never a prayer meeting from which you were absent.

It is the loss of your first love that makes you seek the comfort of your bodies instead of the prosperity of your souls. Many have been the young Christians who have joined this church, and old ones too, and I have said to them, “Well, have you got a ticket for a seat?” “No, sir.” “Well, what will you do? Have you got a preference ticket?” “No, I cannot get one, but I do not mind standing in the crowd an hour or two hours. I will come at five o’clock so that I can get in. Sometimes I don’t get in, sir, but even then I feel that I have done what I ought to do in attempting to get in.”

“Well,” but I have said, “you live five miles off, and there is coming and going back twice a day—you cannot do it.” “Oh, sir,” they have said “I can do it. I feel so much the blessedness of the Sabbath and so much enjoyment of the presence of the Savior.” I have smiled at them. I could understand it, but I have not felt it necessary to caution them—and now their love is cool enough. That first love does not last half as long as we could wish. Some of you stand convicted even here. You have not that blazing love, that burning love, that ridiculous love as the worldling would call it—which is after all the love to be most coveted and desired. No, you have lost your first love in that respect.

Again, how obedient you used to be. If you saw a commandment, that was enough for you—you did it. But now you see a commandment, and you see profit on the other side. And how often do you dally with the profit and choose the temptation, instead of yielding an unsullied obedience to Christ?

Again—how happy you used to be in the ways of God. Your love was of that happy character that could sing all day long. But now your religion has lost its lustre, the gold has become dim. You know that when you come to the Sacramental table, you often come there without enjoying it. There was a time when every bitter thing was sweet.

Whenever you heard the Word, it was all precious to you. Now you can grumble at the minister. Alas! the minister has many faults, but the question is, whether there has not been a greater change in you than there has been in him. Many there are who say, “I do not hear Mr. So-and-so as I used to”—when the fault lies in their own ears.

Oh, brethren, when we live near Christ and are in our first love, it is amazing what a little it takes to make a good preacher to us. Why, I confess I have heard a poor illiterate Primitive Methodist preach the Gospel and I felt as if I could jump for joy all the while I was listening to him. And yet he never gave me a new thought or a pretty expression, nor one figure that I could remember. But he talked about Christ. And even his common things were to my hungry spirit like dainty meats.

And I have to acknowledge, and perhaps, you have to acknowledge the same—that I have heard sermons from which I ought to have profited, but I have been thinking of the man’s style or some little mistakes in grammar. When I might have been holding fellowships with Christ in and through the ministry, I have, instead thereof, been getting abroad in my thoughts even to the ends of the earth. And what is the reason of this, but that I have lost my first love.

Again—when we were in our first love, what would we do for Christ. Now how little will we do. Some of the actions which we performed when we were young Christians, but just converted—when we look back upon them—they seem to have been wild and like idle tales. You remember when you were a lad and first came to Christ, you had a half-sovereign in your pocket. It was the only one you had, and you met with some poor saint and gave it all away. You did not regret that you had done it—your only regret was that you had not a great deal more, for you would have given all.

You recollected that something was wanted for the cause of Christ. Oh! we could give anything away when we first loved the Savior. If there was a preaching to be held five miles off, and we could walk with the lay preacher to be a little comfort to him in the darkness, we were off. If there was a Sunday school, however early it might be, we would be up so that we might be present. Unheard-of feats—things that we now look back upon with surprise—we could perform them. Why cannot we do them now?

Do you know there are some people who always live upon what they have been. I speak very plainly now. There is a brother in this church who may take it to himself. I hope he will. It is not very many years ago since he said to me, when I asked him why he did not do something—“Well, I have done my share. I used to do this and I have done the other. I have done so-and-so.” Oh, may the Lord deliver him and all of us from living on “has-beens!” It will never do to say we have done a thing.

Suppose, for a solitary moment, the world should say, “I have turned round. I will stand still.” Let the sea say, “I have been ebbing and flowing, lo! these many years. I will ebb and flow no more.” Let the sun say, “I have been shining, and I have been rising and setting so many days. I have done this enough to earn me a goodly name. I will stand still.” And let the moon wrap herself up in veils of darkness and say, “I have illuminated many a night and I have lighted many a weary traveler across the moors. I will shut up my lamp and be dark forever.”

Brethren, when you and I cease to labor, let us cease to live. God has no intention to let us live a useless life. But mark this. When we leave our first works, there is no question about our having lost our first love, that is sure. If there be strength remaining, if there be still power mentally and physically, if we cease from our office, if we abstain from our labors, there is no solution to this question which an honest conscience will accept, except this, “You have lost your first love, and therefore, you have neglected your first works.”

Ah! we were all so very ready to make excuses for ourselves. Many a preacher has retired from the ministry long before he had any need to do so. He has married a rich wife. Somebody has left him a little money and he can do without it. He was growing weak in the ways of God, or else he would have said,

*“My body with my charge lay down,
And cease at once to work and live.”*

And let any man here present who was a Sunday school teacher and who has left it, who was a tract distributor and who has given it up, who was active in the way of God but is now idle, stand tonight before the bar of his conscience and say whether he is not guilty of this charge which I bring against him—that he has lost his first love.

I need not stop to say also that this may be detected in the closet as well as in our daily life. For when first love is lost, there is a lack of that prayerfulness which we have. I remember the day I was baptized—I was up at three o’clock in the morning. Till six, I spent in prayer, wrestling with God. Then I had to walk some eight miles, and started off and walked to the baptism.

Why, prayer was a delight to me then. My duties at that time kept me occupied pretty well from five o’clock in the morning till ten at night and I had not a moment for retirement, yet I would be up at four o’clock to pray. And though I feel very sleepy nowadays, and I feel that I could not be up to pray, it was not so then, when I was in my first love.

Somehow or other, I never lacked time then. If I did not get it early in the morning, I got it late at night. I was compelled to have time for prayer with God. And what prayer it was! I had no need then to groan because I could not pray—for love, being fervent—I had sweet liberty at the throne of grace. But when first love departs, we begin to think that ten minutes will do for prayer, instead of an hour, and we read a verse or two in the morning, whereas we used to read a portion, but never used to go into the world without getting some marrow and fatness.

Now, business has so increased that we must get into bed as soon as we can. We have not time to pray. And then at dinner time, we used to have a little time for communion—that is dropped. And then on the Sabbath day, we used to make it a custom to pray to God when we got home from His house—for just five minutes before dinner—so that what we heard we might profit by. That is dropped.

And some of you who are present were in the habit of retiring for prayer when you went home. Your wives have told that story. The messengers have heard it when they have called at your houses, when they have asked the wife—“Where is your husband?” “Ah!” she has said, “He is a godly man. He cannot come home to his breakfast but he must slip upstairs alone. I know what he is doing—he is praying.”

Then when he is at table he often says—“Mary, I have had a difficulty today, we must go and have a word or two of prayer together.” And some of you could not take a walk without prayer—you were so fond of it you could not have too much of it. Now where is it? You know more than you did. You have grown older. You have grown richer, perhaps. You have grown wiser in some respects. But you might give up all you have got, to go back to

*“Those peaceful hours you once enjoyed,
How sweet their memory still!”*

Oh, what would you give if you could fill

*“That aching void,
The world can never fill,”*

but which only the same love that you had at first, can ever fully satisfy.

II. And now, beloved, WHERE DID YOU AND I LOSE OUR FIRST LOVE, if we have lost it? Let each one speak for himself, or rather, let me speak for each.

Have you not lost your first love in the world some of you? You used to have a little shop once—you had not very much business. Well, you had enough and a little to spare. However, there was a good turn came in business—you took two shops and you are getting on very well. Is it not marvelous that when you grew richer and had more business, you began to have less grace?

Oh, friends, it is a very serious thing to grow rich. Of all the temptations to which God’s children are exposed it is the worst, because it is one that they do not dread and therefore it is the more subtle temptation. You know a traveler, if he is going a journey, takes a staff with him—it is a help to him. But suppose he is covetous and says, “I will have a hundred of these sticks”—they will be no help to him at all. He has only got a load to carry and it stops his progress instead of assisting him.

But I do believe there are many Christians that lived near to God when they were living on a pound a week that might give up their yearly incomes with the greatest joy, if they could now have the same contentment, the same peace of mind, the same nearness of access to God, that they had in times of poverty. Ah, too much of the world is a bad thing for any man!

I question very much whether a man ought not sometimes to stop and say, “There is an opportunity of doing more trade, but it will require the whole of my time and I must give up that hour I have set apart for prayer—I will not do the trade at all. I have enough and therefore let it go. I would rather do trade with heaven than trade with earth.”

Again—do you not think also that perhaps you may have lost your first love by getting too much with worldly people? When you were in your first love, no company suited you but the godly. But now

you have got a young man that you talk with, who talks a great deal more about frivolity, and gives you a great deal more of the froth and scum of levity than he ever gives you of solid godliness.

Once you were surrounded by those who fear the Lord, but now you dwell in the tents of “Freedom,” where you hear little but cursing. But friends, he that carries coals in his bosom must be burned. And he that has ill companions cannot but be injured. Seek, then, to have godly friends, that you may maintain your first love.

But another reason. Do you not think that perhaps you have forgotten how much you owe to Christ? There is one thing that I feel from experience I am compelled to do very often, that is, to go back to where I first started—

*“I, the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me.”*

You and I get to talking about our being saints. We know our election, we rejoice in our calling, we go on to sanctification—and we forget the hole of the pit whence we were digged. Ah, remember my brother, you are nothing now but a sinner saved through grace—remember what you would have been if the Lord had left you. And surely, then, by going back continually to first principles and to the great foundation stone, the cross of Christ, you will be led to go back to your first love.

Do you not think, again, that thou hast lost your first love by neglecting communion with Christ? Now preacher, preach honestly and preach at yourself. Has there not been, sometimes, this temptation to do a great deal for Christ, but not to live a great deal with Christ? One of my besetting sins, I feel, is this. If there is anything to be done actively for Christ, I instinctively prefer the active exercise to the passive quiet of His presence.

There are some of you, perhaps, who are attending a Sunday school, who would be more profitably employed to your own souls if you were spending that hour in communion with Christ. Perhaps, too, you attend the means so often that you have no time in secret to improve what you gain in the means. Mrs. Bury once said that if “all the twelve apostles were preaching in a certain town, and we could have the privilege of hearing them preach, yet if they kept us out of our closets and led us to neglect prayer—better for us never to have heard their names than to have gone to listen to them.”

We shall never love Christ much except we live near to Him. Love to Christ is dependent on our nearness to Him. It is just like the planets and the sun. Why are some of the planets cold? Why do they move at so slow a rate? Simply because they are so far from the sun. Put them where the planet Mercury is and they will be in a boiling heat and spin round the sun in rapid orbits.

So, beloved, if we live near to Christ, we cannot help loving Him—the heart that is near Jesus must be full of His love. But when we live days and weeks and months without personal prayer, without real fellowship—how can we maintain love towards a stranger? He must be a friend and we must stick close to Him, as He sticks close to us—closer than a brother—or else, we shall never have our first love.

There are a thousand reasons that I might have given, but I leave each of you to search your hearts, to find out why thou hast lost, each of you, your first love.

III. Now, dear friends, just give me all your attention for a moment while I earnestly beseech and implore of you to **SEEK TO GET YOUR FIRST LOVE RESTORED.**

Shall I tell you why? Brother, though you be a child of God, if thou hast lost your first love, there is some trouble near at hand. “Whom the LORD loveth, he chasteneth,” and He is sure to chasten you when you sin. It is calm with you tonight, is it? Oh, but dread that calm—there is a tempest lowering. Sin is the harbinger of tempest—read the history of David.

All David’s life, in all his troubles—even in the rocks of the wild goats and in the caves of Engedi—he was the happiest of men till he lost his first love. And from the day when his lustful eye was fixed upon Bathsheba, even to the last, he went with broken bones sorrowing to his grave. It was one long string of afflictions—take heed it be not so with you.

“Ah, but” you say “I shall not sin as David did.” Brother, you cannot tell—if thou hast lost your first love, what should hinder you but that you should lose your first purity? Love and purity go together. He that loves is pure. He who loves little shall find his purity decrease, until it becomes marred and polluted.

I should not like to see you, my dear friends, tried and troubled. I do weep with them that weep. If there is a child of yours sick and I hear of it, I can honestly say, I feel something like a father to your children and as a father to you. If you have sufferings and afflictions and I know them, I desire to feel for you and spread your griefs before the throne of God.

Oh, I do not want my heavenly Father to take the rod out to you all, but He will do it if you fall from your first love. As sure as ever He is a Father, He will let you have the rod if your love cools. Bastards may escape the rod. If you are only base-born professors, you may go happily along. But the true-born child of God, when his love declines, must and shall smart for it.

There is yet another thing, my dear friends, if we lose our first love—what will the world say of us if we lose our first love? I must put this, not for our name’s sake, but for God’s dear name’s sake. O what will the world say of us?

There was a time, and it is not gone yet, when men must point at this church and say of it, “There is a church that is like a bright oasis in the midst of a desert, a spot of light in the midst of darkness.” Our prayer meetings were prayer meetings indeed—the congregations were as attentive as they were numerous. Oh, how you did drink in the words. How your eyes flashed with a living fire whenever the name of Christ was mentioned!

And what, if in a little time it shall be said, “Ah, that church is quite as sleepy as any other. Look at them when the minister preaches—why they can sleep under him—they do not seem to care for the truth of God. Look at the Spurgeonites, they are just as cold and careless as others. They used to be called the most pugnacious people in the world, for they were always ready to defend their Master’s name and their Master’s truth, and they got that name in consequence, but now you may swear in their presence and they will not rebuke you.

“How near these people once used to live to God and His house—they were always there. Look at their prayer meetings, they would fill their seats as full at a prayer meeting as at an ordinary service—now they are all gone back.” “Ah,” says the world, “just what I said. The fact is, it was a mere spasm—a little spiritual excitement and it has all gone down.” And the worldling says, “Ah, ah, so would I have it, so would I have it!”

I was reading only the other day of an account of my ceasing to be popular. It was said my chapel was now nearly empty—that nobody went to it. I was exceedingly amused and interested. “Well, if it comes to that,” I said, “I shall not grieve or cry very much. But if it is said the church has left its zeal and first love—that is enough to break any honest pastor’s heart.”

Let the chaff go, but if the wheat remain we have comfort. Let those who are the outer-court worshippers cease to hear—what matters? Let them turn aside, but O, you soldiers of the cross, if you turn your backs in the day of battle, where shall I hide my head? What shall I say for the great name of my Master or for the honor of His Gospel?

It is our boast and joy that the old-fashioned doctrine has been revived in these days and that the truth that Calvin preached, that Paul preached, and that Jesus preached, is still mighty to save, and far surpasses in power all the neologies and new-fangled notions of the present time. But what will the heretic say when he sees it is all over?

“Ah,” he will say, “that old truth urged on by the fanaticism of a foolish young man did wake the people a little, but it lacked marrow and strength, and it all died away.” Will you thus dishonor your Lord and Master, you children of the heavenly king? I beseech you do not so—but endeavor to receive again as a rich gift of the Spirit your first love.

And now, once again, dear friends, there is a thought that ought to make each of us feel alarmed, if we have lost our first love. May not this question arise in our hearts—was I ever a child of God at all?

Oh, my God, must I ask myself this question? Yes, I will. Are there not many of whom it is said, they went out from us because they were not of us? For if they had been of us, doubtless they would have continued with us.

Are there not some whose goodness is as the morning cloud and as the early dew—may that not have been my case? I am speaking for you all. Put the question—may I not have been impressed under a certain sermon and may not that impression have been a mere carnal excitement? May it not have been that I thought I repented but did not really repent? May it not have been the case, that I got a hope somewhere but had not a right to it? And I never had the loving faith that unites me to the Lamb of God?

And may it not have been that I only thought I had love to Christ and never had it, for if I really had love to Christ should I be as I now am? See how far I have come down! may I not keep on going down until my end shall be perdition, and the never-dying worm and the fire unquenchable? Many have gone from heights of a profession to the depths of damnation, and may not I be the same?

May it not be true of me that I am as a wandering star for whom is reserved blackness of darkness forever? May I not have shone brightly in the midst of the church for a little while, and yet may I not be one of those poor foolish virgins who took no oil in my vessel with my lamp, and therefore my lamp will go out?

Let me think, if I go on as I am, it is impossible for me to stop—if I am going downwards I may go on going downwards. And O my God, if I go on backsliding for another year—who knows where I may have backslidden to? Perhaps into some gross sin. Prevent, prevent it by Your grace! Perhaps I may backslide totally. If I am a child of God, I know I cannot do that. But still, may it not happen that I only thought I was a child of God and may I not so far go back that at last my very name to live shall go because I always have been dead?

Oh! how dreadful it is to think and to see in our church, members who turn out to be dead members! If I could weep tears of blood, they would not express the emotion that I ought to feel, and that you ought to feel, when you think there are some among us who are dead branches of a living vine. Our deacons find that there is much of unsoundness in our members. I grieve to think that because we cannot see all our members, there are many who have backslidden.

There is one who says, “I joined the church, it is true, but I never was converted. I made a profession of being converted, but I was not, and now I take no delight in the things of God. I am moral, I attend the house of prayer, but I am not converted. My name may be taken off the books, I am not a godly man.”

There are others among you who perhaps have gone even further than that—have gone into sin and yet I may not know it. It may not come to my ears in so large a church as this. Oh! I beseech you, my dear friends, by Him that lives and was dead, let not your good be evil spoken of by losing your first love.

Are there some among you who are *professing* religion and not *possessing* it? Oh, give up your profession, or else get the truth and sell it not. Go home, each of you, and cast yourselves on your faces before God, and ask Him to search you, and try you, and know your ways, and see if there be any evil way in you, and pray that He may lead you in the way everlasting.

And if hitherto you have only professed, but have not possessed, seek ye the Lord while He may be found and call upon Him while He is near. You are warned, each one of you. You are solemnly told to search yourselves and make short work of it. And if any of you be hypocrites—at God’s great day—guilty as I may be in many respects, there is one thing I am clear of—I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.

I do not believe that any people in the world shall be damned more terribly than you shall if you perish, for of this thing I have not shunned to speak—the great evil of making a profession without being sound at heart. No, I have even gone so near to personality, that I could not have gone further without mentioning your names. And rest assured, God’s grace being with me, neither you nor myself shall be spared in the pulpit in any personal sin that I may observe in any one of you.

But oh, do let us be sincere! May the Lord sooner split this church till only a tenth of you remain, than ever suffer you to be multiplied a hundred-fold unless you be multiplied with the living in Zion, and with the holy flock that the Lord Himself has ordained and will keep unto the end.

Tomorrow morning, we shall meet together and pray that we may have our first love restored. And I hope many of you will be found there to seek again the love which you have almost lost.

And as for you who never had that love at all—the Lord breathe it upon you now for the love of Jesus. Amen.

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