

CONSTRAINING LOVE

NO. 325

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING, JUNE 3, 1860,
BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

*“Oh love the Lord all you His saints.”
Psalm 31:23. (NKJV)*

LOVE Jehovah—so the text runs. God the Father demands your love, and He deserves the warmest affection of your hearts. He has chosen you from before the foundation of the world. He has given His Son that He might redeem you with His precious blood. He has taken you into His family by divine adoption. He has “begotten you again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” It is to Him that you address your prayers; it is He who grants you your requests. It is He who glorified His Son Jesus, receiving Him into the heavens as your representative; and He will glorify Him yet again by gathering you together with all His people into the mansions provided for the blessed. “Oh love the Lord, all you His saints.” Love the Son! It is He whose delights were with the sons of men of old, He who entered into suretyship and covenant engagement on the behalf of His elect. It is He who with His precious blood has ransomed our souls and delivered them “from going down into the pit.” He is our mediator through whom we pray, and our intercessor who prays for us! He is our head, our husband, our king. He it is, even Jesus, who took our nature and wears a body like our own. It is He who imparts to us His mind now, and promises that hereafter we shall bear His likeness in glory. “Oh love the Lord, all you His saints.” Love the Holy Spirit! He has been revealed to us, and is known by us as “the Comforter.” How endearing!—

*“He in our hearts of sin and woe
Has bid streams of grace arise,
Which unto endless glory flow.”*

He has quickened us when we were dead in sins. He has given us the grace of repentance and of faith. He has sanctified us, and kept and preserved us up till now. He has taken of the things of Christ and has showed them unto us. He has dwelt in our poor hearts; He has been our Comforter, our Instructor and our daily Teacher; it is He who convicted us of sin when as yet we perceived not its malignity; and it is He who inspires our hearts and souls with the supernatural will and disposition of living to God. It is of the Holy Spirit we are born-again, and made partakers of the new creation. It is by the same Spirit we are ultimately to be changed into the image of our Lord from glory to glory. “Oh love the Lord, all you His saints.” If a blind world sees no beauty in its God and, therefore, does not love Him, yet, oh you saints love your God! If the enemies of the Most High set up other gods, and bow down before them—if they turn aside into crooked ways and go a whoring after their false gods—yet, oh you saints of His, stand fast and turn to your Jehovah and love Him forever more! Do not merely serve Him, but *love* Him. O house of Israel be not His slaves—serve not your God as the heathen serve their gods—out of terror and fear, but, “Love the Lord all you saints.” Be not as the subjects of Pharaoh, flogged to their work with the whip, but be you the dutiful children of your loving Father! Serve Him, I say, and rejoice before Him. Let love sweeten all your services; give Him all your hearts; make Him the object supreme of all your heart’s desire. Always live *to* Him as you live *by* Him!

I shall have to ask your patience this evening, while I take a liberty with my text. It is this. I mean to confine its exhortation to one person of the Divine Trinity. I have already accepted it in its comprehensiveness, “Oh love *Jehovah*, all you His saints.” Tonight I propose to use it as consonant with such an occasion as the present, when we shall celebrate the supper of our Lord—“Oh love the Lord *Jesus*, all you His saints.” And I shall endeavor, as the Holy Spirit shall enable me, first of all *to stir you up to love Jesus*, by showing how meet and befitting it is that you should do so. And then, I shall seek *to show the*

excellence of loving Jesus—how profitable it will be to your spirit, if your heart is wholly inflamed with love to Him.

I. First, then, my beloved, let one sentiment animate every mind, and one emotion fill every heart. “Oh love the Lord, all you His saints.” I feel in beginning to exhort you to love Christ that love is a stream which must flow spontaneously, a fountain that must bubble up of its own accord. When grace makes a man love Christ, it does not do it by force, for love is a wine that cannot be trod out of the grapes with pressure; it must freely distil. The heart cannot be forced to love. It is true it can be constrained *by* love, but by no other constraint. Moses, with all the thunders that gave extraordinary sanction to his mission, never could make a heart love God! There is nothing but love that can create love, and love, itself, comes like droppings from the honeycomb. The only pressure it will deign to endure is the pressure of love. “Draw me,” says love, “I will run after you—drive me and I cannot but resist—my desire cannot even stir, much less can I run after you with fervent attachment. My heart melted while my Beloved spoke, because He was my Beloved. Because He loved me, and spoke right lovingly, my heart melted. Had He been angry with me, had He spoken with coarse words, my soul might have melted with fear, but it never could have been dissolved with love.” Love, I say, is the only pressure which may be used to produce love, and yet I think I may “stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.” It may so happen that while I strike some fear sparks, they may touch the inflammable passion of your new-born spirits; the breath of the Spirit may fan them and nurture them, till the love of your heart will seem as if it had received new fire.

Oh love! Let me bring forth some of your delicious sweets! Let me reason with the most tender logic of the heart, “Love the Lord Jesus all you His saints,” because His Father loves Him. It must always be right for us to love whom God loves. Now, the Father has much love, but His pre-eminent love is for His only-begotten Son. One with the Father from before all worlds, One in essence, as well as in dwelling place and attribute, our Jesus was ever so dear to His Father’s heart, that no tongue can tell, nor ever heart conceive, how deep the wellspring from where love flowed from the Father to the Son! “The Father has loved the Son and given all things into His hands.” He has loved Him, not only because of the unity of their nature, and because of their being one God, but the Father’s love has flowed out to Christ as the Mediator. He has loved Him for His obedience which He perfected, for the sufferings which He endured, for the ransom which He paid, for the battle which He fought, for the victory which He won. There was one eye that always followed Christ more closely than any other; there was one heart that always understood His pains, and one face that was always filled with celestial delight, when Jesus Christ overcame His enemies. “He who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.” When He had delivered Him up, I think His heart yearned for Him, His heart followed Him and His soul loved Him, as He saw Him rising superior to every enemy He stooped to meet, victorious in every conflict He deigned to wage, bearing every cross He condescended to undergo, and casting every load away from Him when He had borne it the predestined time. The Father, I say, has loved the Son because of the great things He has done, and therefore has He delivered all things into His hands. And, oh heavenly Father! Do you love the Lord Jesus, and shall my heart refuse to love Him? Am I Your child, and shall not the object of my Father’s love be the darling of my heart? What You delight in shall be my delight; where You see beauty, my eyes shall gaze with rapture; and where Your heart finds solace, there shall my heart find unceasing repose and ineffable joy! Does Christ lie in Your bosom? He shall lie in mine! Is His name engraved on Your heart? Oh, let it be engraved on mine also! Do you love Him? Do You love Him so that You could not love Him more? Be it my privilege to love Him thus with all the force and vehemence of my ransomed renovated nature, giving up all my spirit to be devoured by that consecrated fire of love to the Lord Jesus Christ!

Again—may I not stir you up my brothers and sisters, to love Jesus Christ, by reminding you how the angels love Him? They have always loved Him since they have known Him. It is true they are but the creatures of yesterday compared with Him; He is the Everlasting Father. He is the Eternal One, and they, excellent in strength though they are, are but *created* ones. But oh, how they have loved Him! It was their greatest pleasure to fly at His will before He descended from heaven to earth; He had but to speak and it was done; His angels were spirits and His ministers were flames of fire to do His will. Whatever had been the sacrifice He demanded of them, they would have thought it their highest deed to

have performed His will. And when He left the shrine of the blessed to come to earth and to suffer, you know, my brethren, how they followed Him along His starry road, how they would not leave Him till the last parting moment, and then, their songs pursued Him down to earth, while they chanted, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” You know how ever afterwards they watched over Him, how they came to Him in the desert—His great battle with the enemy—and ministered to Him. You know how He was seen of angels all along His pilgrimage, how in the garden there appeared unto Him an angel strengthening Him. You understand how around the bloody tree, they pressed in strong desire to see God in agonies, and wondered what it all could mean, until He said—“It is finished.” They visited His tomb. An angel descended from heaven to roll the stone away from the door of the sepulcher. Yes, more, angels formed His escort when He ascended up to the realms of heaven! Well have we been taught to sing—

*“They brought His chariot from on high,
To bear Him to His throne!
Clapped their triumphant wings and cried,
‘The glorious work is done!’”*

You know how they bow before Him, casting their crowns at His feet, and how they join the everlasting song of “Glory, and honor, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might be unto Him who sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.” Do the angels love Him—the angels that have never tasted of His flesh; that never needed to be washed in His blood—and shall not my heart love Him? Spirits, spirits, spotless ones! Do you cry, “Worthy the Lamb”? My heart shall echo back your notes in louder strains—

*“Worthy the Lamb that died,” they cry,
“To be exalted thus!”
“Worthy the Lamb,” our lips reply—
“For He was slain for us!”*

Stand back angels! Give to man the first place in love; you may adore, but you cannot love as we love, for He is our brother, bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. “He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.” He is ours more than He is yours! He is man, He was never angel. He is our brother and kinsman, our next in blood. Jesus, our souls must love You; we cannot permit even angels to be our rivals here; we will be jealous even of them. We press nearer to Your throne than even they can do!

On each of these themes I am compelled to be short, though there is indeed room enough for expansion, “Oh love the Lord all you His saints,” because your brothers and sisters who are caught up to the third heavens love Him. And here, let us just seek to bring this theme home to each one of us. How many dear friends and kinsfolk, according to the flesh, we have up yonder—where the clouds float not and winters are not known? Where tears trickle from no eyes and furrows mar no brows! Up yonder we have friends; we often speak of them as lost, but how foolish we are; they were never more truly found! Is that mariner lost who has escaped from a shipwrecked vessel and stands upon the rock? No, no! They need not our pity; they might rather commiserate us, if there could be such a thing. We are struggling in the surf to reach the shore as they have done. And oh, my brothers and sisters, I think that whatever they do above should be sufficient example for us to do the like here below! And now, hark, hark how they sing before the throne! I think among those glad voices I can distinguish some friends, of fellow-laborers here below; of parents, of husbands, of wives, of children, who here worshipped with us, but have now gone up yonder to the higher seats of the divine Synagogue, to sing in nobler strains than we can do! Hark, how they sing and what their theme—

*“Jesus, the Lord their hearts employ
Jesus, my love, they sing!
Jesus, the life of both our joys,
Sounds loud from every string!”*

And oh, how they love Him! I think I see them; they have no tears, but joy may moisten their eyes as they look at that dear face, and as they talk to one another with their hearts burning—burning with fiercer fire, and clearer flames than those favored disciples who went to Emmaus with their Lord! They say to one another, “How glorious He is, and we are like He!” I think I hear their sweet conversation as they

count the crowns upon His brow; as they bow down and adore; as they stand up and admire, and then, transported with delight, fly into His arms again! With Him in Paradise continually, in sweet communion with Him—oh, how they love! We are such cold creatures; like icebergs are our hearts—but theirs are like flames of fire! Oh, shall it not be enough to stir us up to love the Savior, when we think how they love Him who have crossed the Jordan and have gone before?

But, come, we will take another argument. Surely I need not say to you, let us love the Lord Jesus, because everything that could possibly honor our souls and compel our love is to be found in Him. There is a thing called beauty which wins upon the hearts of men. Strong Samson is weak as a child before its enchantment. Mighty men, not a few, have bowed before it and paid it homage; but if you want beauty, look into the face of Jesus! That marred visage has more loveliness in it than in all the smiles of Cleopatra or of the fabled maiden of days of yore! There is no beauty anywhere but in Christ! O sun, you are not fair, when once compared with Him. You stars, you are not bright, if you are set side by side with His eyes, that burn like lamps of fire! O fair world and grand creation of a glorious God, you are but a dim and dusky blot compared with the splendors of His face! When you shall see Christ, my brothers and sisters, you will be compelled to say that you never knew what loveliness was before! When the clouds are swept away, when the curtains that hide Him from your view are drawn aside, you will find that not anything you have seen will stand a moment's comparison with Him. You will be ready to break out, "O, black sun, black moon, dark stars, as compared with my lovely Lord Jesus!" I say, my brethren, if you want one to love fairer than the children of men—One, who shall always be worthy of your love, and always show to the eyes of others that there was a sufficient reason for your giving up your heart to Him—love Jesus, for there never was such beauty in the world as there is in Him!

Does wisdom still the love of men? Can he who is into martial triumphs, prowess and renown, subdue the hearty daughters of Jerusalem, would you love a hero? Go forth and meet King Jesus as He returns red from the battlefield, glorious in triumph! Do men sometimes give their love because they at first are led to reverence the character and then afterwards to esteem the person? Oh, think of the matchless character of Christ Jesus! Were there ever such perfections as meet in Him? He has not the excellence of one man, but of *all* men without the faults of any! He is not merely the Rose of Sharon, but He is the Lilly of the Valley. He may not only be compared at one time to the citron among the trees of the forest, but later He is as the goodly cedar! All types of beauty fail and "apples of gold in pictures of silver," lose their force when we come to treat of Him. We must coin new words before we can describe the excellences of Christ! In fact, we must have done with tongues, and go into that land where spirits utter their thoughts without the motion of lips or the expiration of breath, before we shall be able to express the surpassing beauty, the unuttered excellence of the glorious character of Christ! Oh, love Him, then, you people of God! Love Him! Look into His face and see if you can help it. Look, I say, at His character, and see if you can resist it! But I tell you, if you love Him not, it is because you do not know Him—

*"His worth, if all the nations knew,
Surely the whole earth must love Him, too."*

It would be impossible to know Christ and yet not to have the heart affected by Him; you must be overpowered by His charms. One look of His eyes, one touch of His hand shall ravish your heart. Once see His face and let Him but dart a glance at you, your two hearts must be united! Is your soul to you like a river rippling in its bed, alone? And is Christ yonder, like another river gloriously flowing towards the sea? Pray the Lord to bend the stream of your love till it falls into the river of His love, and then you shall be as two streams, whose banks were once divisions, but both are now melted into one! You can then say with the apostle, "For me to live is Christ." Run in the same channel—"and for me to die were gain." You shall be lost in the ocean, swallowed up in boundless and eternal love! "Oh love the Lord, all you His saints."

Yet once more—and this perhaps shall be the best argument I can give, the one which, after all, has the most effect upon us. We love Him—why? Because the Father loved Him? Oh no! We are too gross for that. Do we love Him because the angels love Him? We are not wise enough for that. Do we love Him because the redeemed love Him? I fear, my brothers and sisters, we are still too carnal for that. Do we love Him because of His own excellences? I know not, at first—that is an after attainment of grace.

We love Him, *because He first loved us*. Come, then, love Him, Oh you saints, because He first loved you!

Here is a theme before me which almost imposes silence on my tongue. There are some themes which make one wish that some teacher more able would accept the responsibility of explaining them, because we are afraid of marring their symmetry while we grapple with their details. The picture stretches out, as it were, before my mind's eye with dazzling glory, but I cannot sketch it so that others can see all its grandeur. Christ's love to us we sometimes guess at, but, ah, it is so far beyond our thoughts, our reasoning, our praises, and our apprehension, too, in the sweetest moments of our most spiritual ecstasy—who can tell it? “Oh, how He loved us!” When Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus, the Jews exclaimed with surprise—“Behold how He loved him!” Verily you might say the like with deeper emphasis! There was nothing in you to make Him love you, but He left heaven's throne for you! As He came down the celestial hills, I think the angels said, “Oh, how He loved them.” When He lay in the manger an infant, they gathered round and said, “Oh how He loves.” But when they saw Him sweating in the garden, when He was put into the crucible, and began to be melted in the furnace—then indeed the spirits above began to know how much He loved us! Oh Jesus! When I see You mocked and spit upon—when I see Your dear cheeks become a reservoir for all the filth and spittle of unholy mouths—when I see Your back torn with knotted whips—when I behold Your honor, and Your life both trailing in the dust—when I see You charged with madness, with treason, with blasphemy—when I behold Your hands and Your feet pierced, Your body stripped naked and exposed—when I see You hanging on the cross between earth and heaven in dire torments, and excruciating pain—when I hear You cry, “I thirst,” and see the vinegar thrust to Your lips—when I hear Your direful cry, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” my spirit is compelled to say, “Oh how He loves!” He could die, but He could not cease to love! He could be torn in pieces, but He could not be torn away from His people! He could be buried in the grave, but His love could not be buried; it must live, it must exist, it cannot be taken from His chosen!

Think, too, my brothers and sisters, how much He must have loved you when you were going on in sin. You used to call His ministers hypocrites—His people fools; His Sabbaths were idle days with you; His book, His precious book, was unread; You never sought His grace. Sometimes, perhaps, you used to curse Him, perhaps persecute Him in His children, and yet He loved you. And when His Spirit came after you, you tried to quench it. You would not attend the place where the arrow had first stuck in your conscience; you went to the theater; you tried to quench the Spirit, but His love would not be mastered by you. He had resolved to have you, and the bridegroom would still your heart. Oh how He loved you, when He received you all black and filthy to His bosom—gave you the kiss of His lips and saluted you as His own fair spouse! Since then, remember how He has watched over you in sickness; how He has carried you in His bosom when the road was rough; how He has covered you with His wings and nurtured you with His feathers? Think, I beseech you, how He seems to have moved heaven and earth to bless you; how He has always had a ready ear to hear your prayer, and a swift foot to run to your immediate help! Remember this, above all things—how ill you have requited all His love! You have served Him but little, you have given Him the little ends—you have brought Him no sweet cane—neither have you filled Him with the fat of your sacrifices. You have given Him no bullocks out of your fold, no goats out of your flock; you have offered to Him the blind and the maimed; you have given Him sacrifice, but have you requited Him according to His kindness to you? He bled for you—have you resisted unto blood—striving against sin? He gave His whole self for you—have you given your whole being up to Him? There was not a single nerve in His body which did not thrill with love to you; there was not a drop of blood which had not in its red fluid your name. Surely His body and soul were all yours—His humanity and His Godhead, too!

And are you all His, and can you say—no, I will not ask you, you cannot say—that you have made a dedication to Him, as truly as He made for you? Oh, love Him then, because of His love to you! I am sure you don't know how much He loved, because if you did, it would break your heart to think you love Him so little! Sweet Master, if You were here tonight to tell Your people how You love them, how would it break their hearts! I am a poor spokesman for You, Jesus! Would that You would speak Yourself! Come here—no, You *are* here! You are wherever two or three are met together. Come here to Your

people, then, and wrap them in Your crimson vest and tell them all Your name! Speak unto them and say, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” Shed Your love in their hearts! May they have an infinite consciousness of Your infinite, Your boundless, Your fathomless, Your endless love to them—and then, Your work is done; there will be no need for Your poor servant to cry, “Oh love the Lord, all you His saints,” for they will love You to the fullest³!

II. In the second part of my subject, I am now to show you some of THE EXCELLENCES OF LOVING JESUS.

“Oh love the Lord all you His saints.” There are many excellences which come from love. Love is an ointment that gives forth a sweet smell—but better than that—it is an ointment which heals wounds, that gives health unto the marrow of the bones. Love has a wondrous power. It may seem but little in itself, but it makes men giants. He who bathes in the stream of love becomes invulnerable. No, he becomes omnipotent! Wherein he does not love, he is weak; but as far as he loves is he strong beyond all thought of weakness. Brothers and sisters, one of the first things which love to Christ will do for you is it will make you bear suffering for Christ with joyousness. Remember the martyr Lambert, one of the earliest of the martyrs burnt for Christ’s sake by the Papists? He was treated as badly as any could have been—for when tied to the stake, the firewood was green, and the fire exceedingly slow; and he burnt away by slow degrees. His feet and legs were consumed while yet life was in the body! And that poor soul, when the fire was just about to take away life, though he had been hours burning, was seen to lift up such poor hands as he had—black and charred things—and clap them as best he could, and say, out of that poor black face that looked like a cinder in the flame, “None but Jesus! None but Jesus!” With that he rode in his chariot of fire up to Christ. Perhaps you have to endure some cruel mockings at times. It may be that to serve Christ becomes arduous work for you. Love Him, and you cannot tell how easy it will be to suffer for Him! In fact, the more you have to suffer for Him, the happier you will be. You will count it all joy. No, you will rejoice in that day, and leap for joy when you are allowed to suffer for the name of Him who suffered so much for you! As sure as ever you flinch at the little fire which these mild and gentle days can afford you; as sure as ever you start back at the faint rebukes which the world gives you now—you may infer that you don’t love your Master as you ought! When you love Him, then will you feel that *anything and everything* that the world can do, can never move you from Him—

*“The cords that bind around my heart,
Tortures and racks may rend them off,
But they can never, never part
The hold I have on Christ my Lord!”*

Love will not only make suffering easy, but further, it will make service joyous! Oh, don’t you know in the Church how much shrinking there is from labor for Christ? Why is it in any Church that there are found brothers and sisters who are always for getting others to work, and not wishing to do it themselves? It is lack of love, my brethren, for as soon as ever we love, we shall be wanting to do something for Christ! When we love each other, what things we think of in order to give pleasure; with what solicitude does the wife think what she could do to bring the smile upon the husband’s face; and how will the loving husband think of some means by which he can show his love to his wife! It is so with parents and with children. Have not you seen the mother sitting up night after night without any sleep, and yet she was not weary? Oh, she was very, very weary, but she did not know it—her love would not let her feel it! Have you ever seen the tender spouse watching over her husband at the brink of death, never taking her eyes from him, forgetting to eat bread, thinking of nothing but him? She sleeps as she sits in that chair; it is hardly for a moment. Did he start? She wakes. Was not the fever heavy on him? She is always awake. All the while she holds on, though her eyes are red with sleeplessness. She says she could do it, and she certainly could do it, too, night after night and never fly! And so, do but get your heart full of love to Christ, and it is wondrous what you can do for Him! Nothing you can do for Him will be too much. See how the Moravians served their Master. There was an island in the West Indies upon which some of the Moravians came to land, and they wanted to preach the gospel to the slaves. They asked what would be the condition upon which they would be allowed to land. The cruel terms were these—that they must themselves become slaves! Two of those Moravian brothers became slaves; they bent

their back to the lash that they might toil by day, in order to have the opportunity by night of preaching the gospel to their poor black companions in captivity!

You will remember, too, that when there was found somewhere in Africa a place where there were lepers confined, persons whose limbs had rotted away with foul disease, two Moravians were found to go in there! And though they knew they could not come out alive, and that they must soon be the subjects of leprosy, themselves, and die by slow degree—they were ready enough and willing enough to do it all! The love of the Moravians, brothers and sisters, seems to me to be one of the chief examples of what the love of every Christian should be. There should never be any choice nor stopping. Does Jesus want me here? Can He make better use of me dead than alive? Let me die! Will He be more honored in my poverty than in my wealth? Let me be poor! Will He be more glorified by my toil than by my rest, or by my sickness than by my health? Then be it so! As He surrendered all to the Father, so will I surrender all to Him! As the Father gave all into His hands, so will I give all into His hands to be His forever and ever! Love to Jesus will make all service for Him to be joyous.

Again—love to Christ will make obedience sweet. “Love makes our willing feet in swift obedience move.” What things we will do for those we love that we would not do for anybody else! So for Christ we will do many things, because we love Him, without consulting our feelings, or considering whether any benefit is to accrue, or whether, as some say, it will be of any use. Be it absolutely a command, or more gently, a counsel—“Whatever He says unto you, do it.” Sometimes when I think of many good brothers and sisters here who know it to be their duty to be baptized in His name, and come to His table and celebrate His ordinance in remembrance of Him—and they don’t do it, though Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments”—I don’t know what to say for them! I must let them speak for themselves. I sometimes think, surely if they loved their Master better, they would count obedience a pleasure! I think they would say, “I made haste and delayed not to keep Your commandments,” and they would be ready at once to run in the Lord’s way, without making exceptions to any of His commandments.

Still more, my brothers and sisters, love for Christ will make communion very sweet. How pleasant it is to talk to those in love. Give us a good friend and you have given us a very great blessing! A rainy day indoors with a good companion is very happy, but the best landscape on a sunny day, in the society of those for whom we have no affection, is but a poor thing. Let me be with Christ in the meanest place, rather than with the sinner in his high places. Luther used to say, “I would rather fall with Christ, than stand with Caesar.” And might you not say you would rather be with Christ in poverty, than with anybody else in all the glory and grandeur of this world? Once love Christ and you will never be content to be far away from Him. You will say with the spouse, “As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight and His fruit was sweet unto my taste.” Friend, how long is it since you had fellowship with Christ? Ask the question round, brothers and sisters. Each man and each woman answer it. You are a believer; your faith is in Christ; how long is it since you have seen your Master? How long since you have talked with Him? How long since He has spoken to you? Pass that question round again, I say, and let every man and woman answer it! I am afraid there are some Christians who have not communion with Christ by the months together. No, I fear by years together! Oh, what Christians must you be! Where is that wife’s love who never wishes for a husband’s smile all through the year? Would there be much affection between two friends who could live in the same house and not speak? Oh, brothers and sisters let us examine ourselves and begin to doubt if we can be happy without fellowship with Christ! Christ is so precious to a believer that the believer and Christ should be like two turtle doves that cannot fly unless they are in each other’s company. Of the turtle dove it is said, that when its mate is gone you can never make the turtle consort with another, bring all the doves you will; it is a lonely dove, and will not be consoled. There it sits and pines and coos itself to death, mourning for its mate! The only way to kill a Christian would be to take Christ from him. You might bring him other things, and yet never find another name, never another to whom his heart would be knit. No, if you took up all the saints who have been buried, you could never find one who the believer could consort with as he has consorted with Christ, and held fellowship with Him! Let us all be like the dove then, and cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart!

I think there is no need to say any more on this point, or add another syllable, except it be just this one—love to Christ will make trust easy. I say, love to Christ will make *trust* easy. You have heard that often-told story of the wife on board ship who saw her husband cool and calm when the wind was blowing hurricanes and the masts were creaking. She asked how it was, and the husband, reaching a sword, ran toward her, put it to her very breast, and the wife didn't start for a minute. "Wife," he said, "how is it you are not afraid?—this sword is sharp." "Oh," she said, "but it is in my husband's hand." "Well," he said, "and though that wind is terrible, it is in my Father's hands." Love can trust under any circumstances! It is amazing how some men have been betrayed into trust. You could not excuse them at first; they have shaken hands, and become security for another, because they really loved the person so much that they could not think it possible he could deceive them. And we must not be too severe, because we don't know the circumstances between the two in these cases. We love because we cannot help it; we trust where we love. How the child trusts the mother! The mother has lost her way; she is on a bleak hill; the snow is falling and she cannot find the trail. The path is covered, and there may be a wolf in the distance, and the mother may hear it, but the infant does not start. It sleeps on her breast, and if it wakes, it toys with the mother's cheeks and while she is full of alarm, it knows no fear because it *loves*. And see how the child will jump into your arms, though he is at some height—and if he should fall, he would hurt himself. "I will catch you, child," and it is done! He jumps! And so, where there is love, there will be trust. Do you find it hard to believe Christ? Love Him more and it will be easy! Do you find it hard to think that all things will work together for your good? Love Him and you will be sure of it; you will be quite sure of it! "It cannot be," you say, "that my sweet Lord Jesus will ever do me an ill turn; I love Him so much, and He loves me so much. Let Him smite me and I will kiss His hand! I am sure that He means it in love; it is but a love pat upon a child. Even when He frowns at me, I will still believe that He has a smiling face, only He conceals it to make better known the purpose of His grace. Yes, though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him. I will say, He did it, I will trust in Him.

Thus, brothers and sisters, I think I have given you ample reasons for loving Christ. As for those of you who have never trusted Him, I cannot say to you, love Him. Trust Him, first, and you shall love Him afterwards. Give your soul up into His hands! I charge you by the living God, have done with your self-righteousness, and flee to Christ who has bled on the cross, and when you have been washed in His blood, and robed in His righteousness, then shall you love Him! O Jesus, O Jesus, come forth and will men's hearts tonight! You heavenly lover, our sweet Master, come, we beseech You! When I tell Your story, men will not love You. No, should I tell it with tears in my eyes, they would not believe me. Come, tell it Yourself to them. On their way home break their hearts in love to you! May they tonight fulfill the verse we have often sung in Your honor—

*"Dissolved by Your goodness, I fall to the ground
And weep to the praise of the mercy I've found."*

Jesus! Bring the wanderers home. Reclaim Your lost sheep! May there be joy on earth and joy in heaven, over sinners whom You have found; sinners whom You did come to seek and to save. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house." The Lord add His blessing for Jesus' sake.

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

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