



Fire and Ice Sermon Series

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Love the Lord Jesus

A Series of Extracts from
“The Parable of the Ten Virgins”
by Thomas Shepard

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Motives and Arguments to Persuade Us unto the Love of Christ, and to be Espoused to Him.

Is there no communion to be had with the Lord Jesus, unless virgins —unless espoused to him? O, therefore, here is a match for you; choose him, get your affections, if entangled, to come off if insnared to any other thing, and set your hearts, bestow your love upon him. For it is not a dead faith (but such a faith as is animated by love) that does espouse you to him. Gal. 5:6, “Faith which works by love.” And, therefore, as the love of other things (not worth looking after) has got the sovereignty and royalty of thy heart, so this is a conjugal love, when it bears rule in the heart. Let Christ have this love. And as you have loved creatures for themselves, now love the Lord Jesus for himself. And as they have easily enticed you to set your hearts upon them, now be persuaded to set your dearest affections on him. It is said of John Baptist, he was the bridegroom’s friend, to speak for him. John 3:29. And truly it is the main work of the ministry to woo for Christ, and so to present chaste virgins to Christ. This shall be my work now, which may be seasonable in this decaying time. Therefore I shall chiefly bend my speech to three sorts.

1. To them that never yet loved the Lord Jesus, unless it be from the teeth outward.
2. Those that have been striving for this; yet can not, to their own feeling, come to this.
3. Those that have so; but their affections are dried up, and love is parched away, “iniquity abounds,” etc. And my motives shall be these four:—
 1. Consider the glory of the person whom I shall be a spokesman for this day.
 2. Consider he makes love to thee.
 3. Consider that all he seeks for is love.
 4. Consider what he will do for thee, how he will love thee, if thou wilt love him.

Love Christ Because of His Glory

Consider the glory of the person for whom I plead for love. What can you love besides him? Where can you find any like unto him? I know the glory of the Lord is not revealed, because the grass withers not, the flower fades not, the creature appears not in his withering vanity. Is. 40. But if the Lord would but open your eyes to see him, this would win your hearts alone to him.

Now, I shall single out only these five things, to give you a glimpse of his glory. Lift up thy heart, and say, “Lord, hide not now thy face from me.”

1. He is the Prince of the kings of the earth. Rev. 1:5. The glory of the world is a kingdom, the glorious diamond of that kingdom is a prince in his glory. Now, for a poor beggar to have an offer of love from the greatest prince in the world, would it not tempt her? Would she not forsake her lovers, and set her heart on him? Why, look what a distance there is between the poorest peasant and the highest prince; so base, and a thousand times, are all the princes of the world to Christ, whose dominion is from sea to sea, from sun to sun, who sets up and pulls down kings like counters, who rules their courts, their kingdoms, their hearts, and they do not do, they can not do, but what he will. Other kings are princes, are rulers of men; Christ Prince of Kings. Now, who would not be glad of his love? Who, having tasted death, is set down on the right hand of God on high, clothed with endless glory, who has kings in his chains, whose breath is not in his nostrils, whose favor is not for a day, but he lives and reigns forever. Now, does Christ reign? Is he a Lord, and in glory upon his throne? Methinks I see Jesus at the right hand of God. Your foolish affections have undone you, if you love him not.

2. He is appointed by the Father to be Judge of quick and dead at the last day, (John 5:22, 23,) as well as to rule all now. So that if you do maintain enmity against him, he may let you alone, you may live in health and die in peace, in the eye of man, and in thine own eyes, too; yet there is a day coming he will break out of heaven, with a shout, and appear in the clouds, in the amazing glory of his Father, “with all his mighty angels, and all the dead shall hear his voice,” and you shall appear before him with this body, when the heavens shall burn round about him, and the earth shall tremble under him, and all guilty eyes mourning and wailing because of him. Then you shall know what it is to despise him, and wish, O that I had loved him. Rev. 1:7. You that say you love him, yet by an impenitent heart pierce him, you shall wail, even so, Amen. Men do not see an end of these things, nor the glory of the Lord another day. Hence creatures are loved, and the Lord of glory is loathed. A great prince may not be so highly esteemed until he appears in his state. Prisoners would give any money (much more love) for the judge’s favor.

3. He only is the procurer and author of all the good that ever thou didst suck out here, though thou hast neither known him, nor been thankful to him. For look, as it was with angels, so it should have been with man; the wrath of God should have been poured out upon him, and on all the world, and creatures should have been tormentors of him, but that the Lord Jesus begged and bought the world. And hence (1 Tim. 4:10) called “Saviour of all, but chiefly of the elect.” Micah 4:4, “In his days, men shall sit under vines and fig trees.” So that if ever

any creature ever did thee good, it was Jesus that put that sweetness in it, out of his fullness, and set it a work, sent it to thee, gave it thee to do thee good. Thou shouldst never have had wink of sleep, never restrained from one sin, but lived in blaspheming God, never have heard of a gospel but for Christ. and will you not love him? O ungrateful world! Unnatural generation of men! Why dost thou love any creature? It is for the paint of it and good in it. If there be so much in it, what is there in Christ that gave it, that dropped it into it? Never love him if there be any thing good that is not by him. Ps. 116:1, “The Lord hath heard my prayer; I will call on him as long as I live.” Much more when the Lord hath delivered, and thou didst never seek to him.

4. He is the everlasting wonderment of saints in heaven. The queen of Sheba heard of Solomon, which made her come to see him; but she before imagined but that which now she saw with her own eyes, and that rapt her out of herself. Here we hear of the Lord Jesus, of his beauty and glory, and this draws saints to him; and, when come, they see that which they never saw before, especially when in heaven. Then fall down in everlasting admiration at this mystery, for the blessedness of saints is to see Christ in his glory. John 17:24. Now, this lies in an infinite good; this can not be seen in a finite time. Hence saints shall be piercing their eyes deeper and deeper into this mystery, and shall ever see more and more, but never see all; and this is their joy and glory in heaven. Is it so? What think you, is Christ worthy of your love, or not? Look upon all the glory of the field of this world, you may see an end of all perfection, but never here.

5. He is the delights and bosom love of God himself. Prov. 8:30. Hence John, when he came to set Christ out, (John 3:35,) “The Father loveth the Son.” Now is it so; surely though you see not, taste not this good, yet there it is; now, tell me if this person do not challenge love, would you not be glad to have him? You will say, “Can he look upon such a wretch, embrace such a leper as I? No, surely, he will never do it.”

Love Him because of His Love to You

Consider he makes love to thee. Not one soul that hears me this day but the Lord Jesus is a suitor unto, that now ye would be espoused to him; “He came unto his own, and they received him not.” Whatever the secret purpose of Christ is, I regard not. In this evangelical dispensation of grace, he makes love to all. John 1:12. It is clear. Matt. 22:2, 3. If there be a gospel in the world, there is this love of Christ yearning toward all, especially all that have this gospel of peace sent to them. Luke 2:10. “It is tidings of great joy to all people,” as law is tidings of great sorrow to all people. Luke 2:14. Angels from heaven preached this good will towards men. For if the challenge of love from men should be founded on his actual love to some, having died for some, then the offer would be particular. But it is grounded, 1. On his own worth and glory, and hence he challengeth love. 2. On this, for aught I know, he has loved me. So that thou art not so vile but the Lord Jesus’ heart is toward thee, and his eye is upon thee for love. But it is not all love, but only some that overcomes. 1. Now it is real love. 2. Frequent love. 3. Constant. 4. Pure love he makes to thee.

1. It is real love. When the gospel and ministers seek for love, the Lord is real in his desires, there is no collusion or dissembling, (2 Cor. 5:20,) in Christ’s stead, “He that receiveth you receiveth me;” thou thinkest the Lord cares not for thee, nor doth not desire thee, though he doth others; but,

1. Either the Lord would have thee loathe him or love him. What think you?

2. If the Lord did not make love to thee, he would not be really angry for rejecting of this love; but the Lord is really angry for rejecting it, and wroth with nothing so much as that. Ps. 2:12. Here he swears in his wrath, (Ps. 95:11,) when he opens his bosom for thee to rest in, and thou wilt not.

3. Look but upon the dealings of God with thee. 1. Hast thou not oft thought some in hell better than thee? Why, the ruin of millions of men is to win love from thee. Jer. 3:8,9,10. 2. Hath not the Lord sent many a mercy to thee, not one but was to win thee? Ps. 81:10,11,12. 3. Hath not the Lord withheld many from thee, as here in this wilderness? Jer. 3:3,4. 4. Hath not the Lord sent many sorrows, terrors, fears, cares, wearisome businesses, that thou hast wished an end of life? This is love. Hos. 2:6. 5. Hath not the Lord moved thy heart many a time toward him by persuasions, arguments which have a power to move the heart? This is love, (Hos. 11:4,) “cords of a man.” 6. Hath not the Lord oft melted thy heart for mercies, as David, when he might have killed Saul? Truly, you may feel his love which is much toward you; that which keeps off thy heart from love is, the Lord intends it not to me, he is not plain with me. But he sends to thee his

plain gospel, which thou art to attend unto; and he takes fittest seasons to speak to thee now in the time of thy health. And does he not oft visit thy heart when thou art alone?

2. It is fervent, vehement, earnest love. Sometimes a suitor is real, but he is not earnest. Now, thus the Lord is. 1. The Lord longs for this. Deut. 5:29. 2. Pleads for this, (Jer. 2:5,) “What iniquity,” etc. 3. Thinks long for this time, (Jer. 13:27,) “Jerusalem will not be made clean; when shall it once be?” 4. Mourns when he hath not this, (Ezek. 6:9,) “Broken with their whorish heart.” 5. Content to give away any thing for it, all the love of Christ is founded on this. 6. If thou comest not presently, he is content to wait that he may be gracious.

3. It is constant and continual; there is not a moment, thou dost not so oft breathe, as thou mayst see and taste love. Isa. 27:3, 65:2. 1. After all thy whorish departing from God, that if man should do so, no man would own, yet he saith, “Return to me;” thou seest never a creature but thou hast loved more than Christ; yet return. 2. When God threatens most terribly, and sets his fury on record, yet then there he minds nothing but love. Jer. 36:2,3. 3. When none else will own and pity thee, thou art so vile, yet (Ezek. 16:2,3) the Lord saith, “Live, then is a time of love.” 4. Nay, when thou hast cast away thyself as a forlorn creature, yet (Hos. 14:3) “In thee the fatherless find mercy.” 5. When he hath thee in his arms ready to give thee up, yet then, “How shall I give thee up, O Ephraim?” Hos. 11:8. I tell thee, if one sparkle of his eternal blasting displeasure should fall upon thee, it would be so intolerable that it would sink thee; his love is as strong as death; no water can quench it. O, it is not so with man, or great men. Once repulsed is enough; why should the Lord do so here? Many think time is past. It is not so. It is the temptation of them that have time, not of them that want it. Take heed this make thee not despise him.

4. It is a pure love. Others make love for their own ends, but the Lord hath no need of thee, or of thy love. He could raise up of stones children of praise; he could have gone to others; he could have, and can fetch, his glory out of thy ruin. He was blessed before all worlds: and by all thy sins thou dost but throw stones against the wind, or snowballs against the sun. Why doth he do it? O, it is thy good. He pities thee, as once Jerusalem, to look upon thy destruction and desolation. As it is with the elect, they have wrath before their eyes, and hence persuade others; so the Lord Jesus.

Christ's Wonderful Love

Consider it is nothing else but love the Lord looks for, or cares for. Love looks for nothing but love, (Prov. 8:17,) and this is the end of all election, to be holy before him in love; and, mark it, if it be a stayed love that constrains thee to him, you can not wrong him. As if you come and persuade one to murder his child, he can not; so if persuaded to despise, O, bowels of heartbreaking love. 2 Cor. 5: And surely it is admirable love. What if it were thy goods, thy Isaac to be sacrificed, thy body to be burned, it was nothing; but he desires only love, only thy heart, which has forged so much villany against him. Let him never be called upon, or professed, if not worthy of this. After all, is this all? Yes, no portion he cares for; and when he has this, he has all. Wonder at this, O angels!

Consider How Christ Will Love You.

Consider what he will do for thee, how he will love thee, if thou wilt thus love him.

1. He will set thee next himself in honor, (Ps. 45:9;) that as the Lord Jesus is next to God, sits at his right hand, so here, which is an honor that the angels have not, who are nowhere called Christ's spouse; hence never had such a union, hence never shall partake of that honor of saints.

2. He will enrich thee. As it is with man and wife, all that he has is hers; so himself and all his glory, his God, his Father, his kingdom is thine. Prov. 8:21, they that love me inherit something; others nothing; no, nothing indeed, only shows of good; and they find it so when they awake, nothing their own, nothing long; that let thy outward man, yea, thy inward, be never so poor, thou shalt by him be heir of all.

3. He will counsel thee. Hence David (Ps. 73) made choice of God: "Thou wilt guide me by thy counsel." No greater curse than to be left to the guidance of a man's own counsel; but here there shall not be any strait, but the Lord will show thee a way out of it, either by his prudence or providence. There shall not be any secret of Christ that thou desirest to know, but, as Christ told them, "You are my friends," so you are my spouse; hence all his secrets shall be opened to thee; there shall not be one act of thy life but ordered by infinite prudence, and wisdom, and love. Sometimes we are befooled in our own counsels, and left to them to teach us to depend on the Lord the more; yet thereby shall come out such good that it shall be among us as with Joseph's brethren.

4. He will dwell with thee as a man must dwell with his wife, (John 14:23;) that the great Mediator, that passes by kings and princes, and will not look

on them, should come and dwell with thee. This is better than to have the presence of kings, the guard of angels, better than heaven itself, that he should dwell where is nothing worthy to entertain him, only something to grieve him. Now this is,—

1. A constant assistance of the Spirit; that, let the soul go where he will, — be brought to never so low an ebb, —yet Christ will not out, but some stirrings, sighings, lookings, pantings after Christ; when heart and strength fail, yet God, etc.; when ready to give all for lost, then consider, as Ps. 83:2. If he does depart, he will not be long, but return again; and those that know his affection know it so to be. Is. 54 “For a little moment,” etc. So the Lord may depart; and, when his presence

is a little more esteemed, come again with everlasting mercies. As a man may know many weaknesses by his wife, yet she having not bestowed her heart on any other, he will return; so if thou canst say yet I am the Lord’s, he will return.

5. He will rejoice in thee and over thee, (Zeph. 3:17,) as a bridegroom does over the bride. Not because of any beauty in thee, for there is none, but because given in marriage of the Father, and for his own sake. This day thou shalt no sooner set thy heart on Christ but he falls in love with thee, and will take thee with joy; thou thinkest he will be angry if thou closest with him and love him; no, it will be the joy of heaven, of Jesus Christ himself.

6. He will exceedingly comfort thee; and look as it is with tender husbands, then they comfort most when most sorrows betide them; for who could endure his wife should be always drooping? So even then when nothing doth or can comfort thee, the Lord will. Is. 54:6. For the Lord doth not always comfort; but when in need, as with the patriarchs, then God appeared, when they were at worst; and these are abundant comforts. 2 Cor. 1:3,4,5. You shall not need to scramble for it, as many do, whose hearts do not love Christ in truth as yet.

7. He will put up all wrongs, and bear exceedingly with thee. Many think, even when God hath sealed love to them, if any little sin be committed, then they are cast off; no, if under the law, so indeed, but when espoused to him, it is not weaknesses nor willfulness can make the Lord cast thee away; but he will heal the one, and afflict thee (yet not cast thee off) for the other; (Ps. 89:33,) “My loving-kindness will I never take away.” Yea, he will forgive both; (Luke 7:47,) “Much forgiven because she loved much.” Nay, thy wrongs shall be an occasion to make him love thee more; (Rom. 5) “Where sin abounds, grace abounds.”

8. He will never part with thee. Hos. 2:19. Once love him, and he will never lose thee.

1. No sin shall part thee and him; for Christ, when he enters into marriage covenant, does not suspend his love on our grace or holiness, —then he might

leave quickly,— but on his own grace to wash away our filthiness. Eph. 5:25, 26. If a husband marries a woman only for so long as she is in health, then when sickness comes he may depart; but *e contra*, if to take away her sicknesses, then they can not hinder; nothing but adultery can part. Now, that they can not do, for nothing breaks till covenant is broken; and the covenant here is everlasting, and so undertaken for by the Lord that it can never be broken.

2. No miseries can, (Rom. 8:35,36,37;) “Can tribulation?” It makes man leave us; but this is peculiar to Christ—he will not leave.

3. Death can not. It must part man and wife, though loved never so dearly before, but here not; but then he will come himself and fetch thee, (John 14:1,2,3,) take thy soul to the bride chamber, there to be with him forever and ever; and he will keep the dust of thy blessed body, and not lose one dust of it, and at the last day raise it; and then, when others shall cry out, yonder is he whom I have grieved, then shalt thou lift up thy head; yonder comes my husband, to comfort me, to crown me, that I may dwell with him. It shall be the blessed day to thee. And when judgment is done, thou shalt go with thy beloved from the air up to heaven with a shout, and live in his love and dearest embracing of thee; and this he will do for thee, so poor and vile in thine own eyes. Now, will you have him, and that now, or no?

Love the Lord Jesus!

He has from before all worlds loved thee, when [there appeared to be] no reason for it. Jer. 31:1-3. Thou hast neglected to love him long, all thy youth, nay, it may be all thy life; O, you beloved of the Lord, begin to do it now, when there is all reason for it, when heaven calls for it, earth calls for it, ordinances plead for it, Spirit saith come, and calls for it too. It may be thy life is not long. What, not yet?

Question: But how shall I come to do this, thus to love the Lord?

Answer: The Lord only can plant, can water this grace; yet because the Lord does it by means, I will give you some now.

I. Labor to find out the true sweetness, and to taste the bitterness of the deceitful sweetness of all creatures: for this is a rule in reason, a man’s affections, like streams, must run some way; and it is a rule in theology, stop the affections from running to the creature, and in a sincere heart it will run unto Christ, (Hos. 2:6, 7,) if it be from all creatures. Now, then, the affection is turned from the creature, when it finds the bitterness of the deceiving sweetness of it; and, secondly, finds out the real sweetness of it; for make it as a rule, when a man’s

heart can not love Christ, (unless it be when it is benumbed,) it is because he has somewhat else to joy his heart now, let the creature yield you no more joy, and Christ has your love; indeed, you may and must joy in the real sweetness of it, and this will increase, and not diminish your love.

Question: What is the real sweetness of the creature?

Answer: Christ's love. O, see this! If Christ should not love thee, would not thy life be death, thy salvation from many dangers be damnation, thy friends miserable comforters, thy joys sorrows? What good would any thing do thee if thou hadst these thoughts—all these I have, but wrath with them? What comfort can a man take in his feast, if news were then brought that after it is done, you must go to the stake to be burnt? You that joy in your pastimes, one frown of Christ would blast all. O, see this! Psalm 63: "Thy loving kindness is better than life; in thy favor is life." Now, joy for this, and this will knit your heart nearer to him. For Jesus' sake, ponder this point.

Now, 2. Taste the bitterness of the sweetness remaining now it is distilled; and Satan shows a threefold sweetness, before, in, and after the enjoying of it.

Now, 1. Before, remember how they have drawn a ray and held thy heart from God, done thee more hurt than all afflictions; many a sweet smile hadst thou had from God, but for them.

2. In the enjoying of it, it is sweet; but when it is sweet to thee, it is then most bitter to the heart of God; when thy joy is kindled, the Lord's sorrow is stirred up and provoked.

3. After; 1. It will draw thy heart from God; and, 2. It will be bitter in thy belly at last. Whatever sweetness draws thee from the love of Christ, O, it will be bitter. Rom. 6:21. Chew upon this, and see if any thing here be worthy of your joy, and if not, then return to your first husband.

II. Taste the all-sufficiency of the love of Christ. A woman that is not content with her husband's love, she will not love him as it is fit. So when other things make love to us, and the Lord's love is not enough, (Cant. 1:4,) "More than wine." Hence "the upright love thee." Do but sit down and think what this is: if once he loves thee, whatever he can he will do for thee; he will order all thy life, not one thing shall hurt thee; every thing in providence shall work for thy glory, sins, sorrows, etc., SO as thou shalt say his denials are better than his gifts, his blows better than smiles, his withdrawings better than his presence, these evils better than joys, and when once he loves me, he will never leave me; that come life, come death, I am safe. O, taste this!

III. See the Lord Jesus now as he is, and in truth this were enough to make any profane heart love him, much more a saint espoused to him; but the Lord has

hid himself from their eyes. Shall he be so, is he so from yours? 1 Pet. 1:8, “When seeing not with bodily eyes, but with faith ye love him.” 1 John 3:1-3, “We shall see him as he is.” Why, suppose the day of doom was come, Christ in the clouds and all creatures before him, all angels ministering to him, in all the glory of his Father; O, then, the love of Christ; O, one smile, one word of Christ would be precious! Lord, that men should be in a dream! See Christ a little higher set in his throne, a place more glorious, though less seen, in all the glory of his Father, all mighty angels ministering to him, all the world put into his hand, doing what he will, and all he will; why will you not love him now? Is the gospel a fable? Say so if it be, then love him not if you can. When Simeon and the wise men saw him, though but in his abasement, they honored him; much more now if they see him in glory. It is a question whether the beams of the sun are fire. Some demonstrate it thus: Take a glass and gather together the beams, it burns. Therefore so, if you would see so as to be affected, gather together the beams of his glory and love; thus you see the means to get fit love; and if it be lost, O, now get it again, lest the Lord strain for it, else you are not fit; and if it be not any love that suffices, much less no love, as in many of you; but consider, (1 Cor. 16:22,) “He that loves not Christ, let him be accursed.” O that this might be won from you! O, little love goes out to Christ; who sees it not? Ordinances of Christ, men are weary of them; the truths of Christ, despise them; the servants of Christ, they quarrel with them. Now, recover your love; the Lord help you so to do.

Objections to Loving Christ Answered

Object. 1. If the Lord be so desirous of me, why doth he not Overcome me?

Ans. If the Lord doth it, it is by these cords of love; and if not, the brand of a reprobate is upon thee.

Object. 2. But I do love him already.

Ans. Is it with such a love as makes you unable to resist him, to wrong him? As the apostle said, “We cannot speak against the truth, but for it;” for if not, it is nought. There is a natural love to Christ, as to one that doth thee good, and for thine own ends; and spiritual, for himself, whereby the Lord only is exalted. Hast thou this?

Object. 3. But I do not hate Christ.

Ans. If any man do not love him with a positive love, let him be anathema.

Object. 4. I can not love him.

Ans. 1. What canst thou love else? 2. Thou canst not love him so well as thou shouldst; therefore close with him, and love will follow. 3. Get the Lord to overcome thy heart. Jer. 3:19.

Quest. How shall I do it?

Ans. 1. Set him before thee. "Who will commit lewdness while her husband looks on?" Ps. 16:8.

2. See what content thou givest Christ by love. Smallest duties coming from love are accepted. What makes thee wrong him to please thyself? Let a thing cross thee, yet it contents Christ Jesus.

3. Get him, and wait by faith on him to overcome thy heart, and the work is done then. Now, will you do this or not? If not, say, then, you have had a fair offer, and tell the devils so, when thou goest down to hell, as it may be thou mayst ere long. Men talk of terrible sermons, but these sink deepest. Tell me, dost thou love the Lord only? Wilt thou keep lusts or Christ alone? If so, then look to it. In this country, a woman killed her child, and she said when she did it, her child smiled upon her. Wilt thou kick Christ's love now when he smiles upon thee? Afterward she repented, but it was too late. Women, when they have a mind to some other, murder their husbands; but if known, burned they must be. But wilt thou have him and love him alone? O, if persuaded to this, then happy forever! Let this day be the beginning of eternal glory to thy soul, and the God of peace be with thee.

How Shall I know that the Lord Loves Me?

Quest. How shall I know that the Lord loves me, despite my sin?

Ans. 1. If the Lord loves thee for his name's sake, it will draw thee to that fellowship with itself, that whatever thou lackest thou wilt seek for it hence, by presenting that name of God, that for his own sake he would supply. I know the Lord loves for Christ's sake; but why should Christ help for his name's sake? For thus many hypocrites think, when they see God's anger against them for their sin, they seek to remove sin, and when that is done, think God is at peace, and now all is well. They see the Lord is delighted with the obedience of his people; hence fall to that work, and now think the Lord is pleased with them. But if ever the Lord loves any man, he will first stop his mouth, whether Jew or Gentile, (Rom. 3:19,) and make him, on his knees, know there is no reason for it, nay, all reason against it. Now, has not the Lord brought thee to this? And hence, having nothing to quench God's anger but Christ, hast held up him before God; and having nothing to move Christ, hast held up his name before him, and here hast rested thy wearied

heart looking to him, if any grace be begun in thee, that he would perfect it; if none, that he would begin it; if unfit and unworthy, to prepare thee for it, only for his own good pleasure. This is one evidence of it. As it is in some seals, you can hardly perceive in the seal what is engraven there, but set it on wax, you may see it evidently. So here, hardly can you see the Lord's love for his own sake; if thou cleavest with dearest affection to this love for its own sake, there thou art safe. Prov. 18:10, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower," etc.; and this is not only at first conversion, but ever after all duties, all enlargements. Ezek. 16:*ult.* And this does evidence love.

1. Because, if thou hadst the righteousness of angels, thou wouldst think it a good evidence; but this of Christ is a thousand times dearer.

2. This is a setting of God against himself, i.e., to answer himself; and hence saints, in all their straits and sorrows, hither had recourse. I speak not now of temporal blessings, but of everlasting love, and all the fruits of it, that here it hangs. Now, I say, you are built in a rock higher than all powers of darkness; now a key is put into thy hand to unlock all God's treasure; now thou art in the very lap of love, wrapped up in it, when here thy heart rests; and therefore, if this be thus, see it, and wonder his name has moved him to love me.

3. You shall find this, if the Lord for his name's sake loves thee, there is not any carriage or passage of providence of him to thee, but he gets himself a name first or last by it; for if this be God's purpose, every passage of providence is but a means to this end. Hence he will attain this end by every act of his providence toward thee. Hence you shall find that those very sins that dishonor his name, he will even by them (and if by them, by all things else) get himself a name; he will be so far from casting thee out of his love, that he will do thee good by them. Those very sins that God damns others for, he will make to humble thee, empty thee.

Pharisees persecuted Christ, and lost all for it; Paul was so, and it humbled him all his life — "Not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God; "and it made him lay up all his wealth in mercy — "I was received to mercy." 1 Tim. 1. Mary sins much, and God forgives much, and she loves much; others sinned much, and God hardened much. Judas betrays Christ and repents, and hangs himself, and flies from him; Peter denies him and weeps, and hence he is the first that preaches him. And this is certain, in the best hypocrite, sins left in him either never make him better, but blind and harden him, and he has *his* distinctions of infirmity, etc., that he slights them day by day, till all his days are run out; or if any good, it is no more than Judas or Cain, some legal terrors, or

other light flashes of comfort; but to be more humble indeed, etc., this he finds not.

Now, is it not so with thee? Doth not thy weakness strengthen thee, with Paul? Doth not thy blindness make thee cry for light? And those cries have been heard; out of darkness God has brought light. Thou hast felt venom and risings of heart against Christ; and do they not make thee loathe thyself more, that thou thinkest never any so beholding to grace? Do not thy falls into sin make thee more weary of it, watchful against it, long to be rid of it? And so sin abounds, but grace abounds. Why should this be so? For his name's sake, because he will love thee; hence it is so great and unmatched, that he will make thy poison thy food, thy death thy life, thy damnation salvation, thy very greatest enemies thy greatest friends. And hence Mr. Fox said he thanked God for his sins more than his good works. I have marveled at God's dealings with his people; they depart, and stay long, and care not for returning again; in that time a mighty power teaches, humbles, brings back, when they never thought of it. O, the reason is, God will have his name. Now, if thus, your assurance will be strong and constant; but, if you build thus, I have done this, etc., I have that, your assurance will not stand; therefore look and see if it be not thus with you.

He Loves You with an Unmeasurable Love.

6. He loves thee with an unmeasurable love. Rom. 5:20, Where sin there grace hath abounded." Hence (Eph. 2:3, 4) love "and "great love." Verse 7, "Exceeding riches of his grace." For there is in Christ,—

1. A created love. One man loves another exceedingly, as Jonathan did David. Now, he hath the perfection of all human or angelical love toward his people put in him.

2. Uncreated love, infinite love of a God, and hence it is unmeasurable. He thinks nothing he doeth too much, nothing he gives too dear. Hence, when world is slain, Satan cast out, when he is out, sin must out; when some sins are removed, the rest must; when they are out, then death must; when death, then hell. And when there is no life, no grace, he works it; it decays, he restores it; it can not act, he quickens it; it can not, doth not grow, he waters it. He hath given thee the earth, and the days of peace and patience; these are too little. He calls thee, and when thou canst not come, draws thee, and gives thee pardon, that is too little. He gives earth to thee, that is too little, (for they are made co-heirs;) he gives promise to thee, that is too little; he gives himself and Spirit, and can he do more? Yes; we can not drink in all that goodness and love; hence he gives eternity to thee, and he

shall more and more enlighten thee; not only let thy soul live to bless him, but thy poor body, and every dust of it, to be raised up to glory with him. What the Lord promised to Abraham, “In blessing I will bless,” that portion is thine. O, now love him without measure. “O, how I love thy law!” How did David love it? I can not tell; but if he loved the word of Christ, then much more the person of Christ, the presence of Christ, everlasting fellowship with Christ.

O, take heed of giving Christ, and measuring out unto Christ his portion, his allowance, that when the Lord comes to you for more love, (as he doth daily,) you give him that answer which many do in their practice —you have let him have as much as you can; so that you can not spare any more from yourselves, from a base world, from wife and child and creature, from a slothful course; you hope the Lord will accept of that little he hath. I confess that a little water in a spring is better than much that comes by land floods; but be sure it be a spring, else not accepted. Beloved, time was you lived without Christ, did nothing for him; now you do, and what thou dost this year, didst last year, and no more. Will you thus stint the Lord? Either do more, give more, or mourn you can not. O, one life, one heart is too little for him. It hath put me to sad fears of many men’s estates to see this frame, a world of sin without measure every day. Where is the Christian that loves the Lord every day? How can any then say much is forgiven, when they do not love much?

Behold the Happiness of those Espoused to Christ

Use 2. Hence behold the happiness of all them that be espoused to the Lord Jesus, in that their hopes are laid up in another world, at the day of the coming of the Lord Jesus. 1 Cor. 15:19, “If we had hope only in this life, we were of all men most miserable.” Because none so foolish or so sensible of misery as they; but our hopes stretch to another life, to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Suppose a man had all the crowns of the world cast at his feet, but at last to be dragged before the judgment seat of Christ, and there to stand quaking, what should he be the better? What though saints have all the miseries in this world; but, at last, “with these eyes they shall see the Lord,” and stand triumphing before him, and have a real sight and certain expectation of this. What people in the world so great as these!

Quest. What do they wait and expect for?

Ans. Great things, which may astonish the whole creation.

1. They look for him “to change their vile bodies that this their husband, at the marriage day, should take away these rags, and make them like unto his

glorious body,” brighter than the sun; so that burn them, cut them to pieces, they see Christ loves both, and hence holds sword and soul in one hand, and scabbard in another, etc.

2. They expect he should take away all their sins, and make them like unto himself; engrave on their souls perfectly his own image, that their enemies they feel now, they look they “shall never see them more.” 1 John 3:2. And as no evil like it, no mercy like this; and no evil to saints like this, that yet they should grieve the heart of such a husband.

3. They look that he should take away all sorrows and tears from them; for this the Lord promiseth, and begins to execute now, but it shall be perfected then. Is. 25:8, 9. And hence called “the times of refreshing.” Acts 3:19, 20. It is true, the spouse and church is now sorrowful to the very heart many times, but there is a time coming that they shall never sorrow more.

4. They look that he should take away all shame from them. For no people in the world is laden with more calumnies and reproaches by the wicked and by hypocrites, and hard speeches from the godly, and they doubt whether they be sons or no. Now, then the whole world shall see they are sons, and shall stand amazed at them, and shall not doubt of it, nor themselves; for the Lord shall proclaim it, and they shall hear, These are my jewels. And this they look for. 1 John 3:1,2.

5. They look for recompense to all their “labor of love” to him and his. Hence, (1 Cor. 15:58,) “Knowing your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” Hence the apostle oft defers men for that recompense till now. “The Lord show mercy to the house Onesiphorus in that day.” 2 Tim. 1:18. So that some heretics have thought souls sleep till then. They may pray, and no answer; seek to do good, and do none. O, but the Lord will recompense them abundantly.

6. They look then to “be ever with the Lord.” 1 Thess. 4:17. Never to be parted from him, never to live without him; nay, never to go away from under his wing, out of his bleeding bosom of love and endless and unspeakable compassions any more. And being with him to see his glory, and never see the depth of it, and to have the Lord to serve them, (Luke 12:37,38,) and giving whatever they call for, and all this when thousands shall at this time be crying for a drop of water, and can not get it. Now, all this they look for, and more too. Which is, 1. Certain. For “hope maketh not ashamed.” 2. Which fills their hearts with glory, and unspeakable glory, too; for it makes it so clear and certain that they have it all already; for though absent, hope makes it as present. Rom. 8:24. He doth not say we shall be, but “we are saved by hope.” Faith takes hold on the beginning, hope on the end. O, the heavy wrath of God upon a world of poor,

blind, ignorant men, that have no hope, no hope of Christ, no hope of glory, unless a flattering dead hope. What a sad thing is it to think, of a number of men that are buried in the world, and never to awaken until they see Christ in the clouds of heaven, coming to be revenged on them! O, methinks I see them falling down before the judgment seat, and crying out, O that we had known of this day! O, alas! that I had hope! but not such a hope, but am now deceived. O, it is otherwise with saints; they shall find what they hoped for, and infinitely more. What hurt can any do them? Let all the world come against them, their husband will come, and will kick them under his feet. Let them load them with reproaches, fill their hearts with sorrows and their eyes with tears, their Lord's coming will comfort them. Let Satan tempt, and a Father hide his face, behold, the Lord cometh, that shall deliver and redeem them. O, see their blessedness, and let it draw you to make up the match with Christ, that never did it yet. He has been wooing of you, longing for you, and you wooing of him again. Lord, take me. What hinders you, then, from striking the match and concluding it? To give thyself this day to him, and take him only, rejoice in him only, when nothing thou dost can be so pleasing to him. And now you may look and believe what one day you shall to your comfort feel. And account yourselves most wretched creatures until the Lord be pleased to espouse you to himself.

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