

# Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 269

## THE CHRISTIAN'S LOVE FOR CHRIST

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*Jesus Christ: Whom having  
not seen, ye love.*

1 Peter 1:7-8

### Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,  
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,  
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

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# 269

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# LOVEST THOU ME?

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

*Lovest thou me?—John 21:16*

**A** disposition to love somebody is one of the commonest feelings that God has implanted in human nature. Too often, unhappily, people set their affection on unworthy objects. I want this day to claim a place for Him Who alone is worthy of all our hearts' best feelings. I want men to give some of their love to that divine Person who loved us and gave Himself for us. In all their loving, I would have them not forget TO LOVE CHRIST.

Suffer me to press this mighty subject upon the attention of every reader of this paper. This is no matter for mere enthusiasts and fanatics.<sup>1</sup> It deserves the consideration of every reasonable Christian who believes the Bible. Our very salvation is bound up with it. Life or death, heaven or hell, depend on our ability to answer the simple question "Do you love Christ?"

**Let me show the peculiar<sup>2</sup> feeling of a true Christian towards Christ: he loves Him.** A true Christian is not a mere baptized man or woman. He is something more. He is not a person who only goes, as a matter of form, to a church or chapel on Sundays and lives all the rest of the week as if there was no God. Formality<sup>3</sup> is not Christianity. Ignorant lip-worship is not true religion. The Scripture speaketh expressly, "They are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Rom 9:6). The practical lesson of those words is clear and plain. All are not true Christians who are members of the visible church of Christ.

*The true Christian is one whose religion is in his heart and life.* It is felt by himself in his heart. It is seen by others in his conduct and life. He feels his sinfulness, guilt, and badness and repents. He sees Jesus Christ to be that divine Savior Whom his soul needs and commits himself to Him. He puts off the old man with his corrupt and carnal habits and puts on the new man (Eph 4:24). He lives a new and holy life, fighting habitually against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Christ

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<sup>1</sup> **enthusiasts and fanatics** – those who erroneously believe that they receive direct divine communications and those who are characterized by excessive, mistaken religious ideas.

<sup>2</sup> **peculiar** – something that is characteristic of a person.

<sup>3</sup> **formality** – strictly observing forms of worship without regard to their inner significance.

Himself is the cornerstone of his Christianity. Ask him in what he trusts for the forgiveness of his many sins, and he will tell you [it is] in the death of Christ. Ask him in what righteousness he hopes to stand innocent at the Judgment Day, and he will tell you it is the righteousness of Christ. Ask him by what pattern he tries to frame his life, and he will tell you that it is the example of Christ. But, beside all this, there is one thing in a true Christian that is eminently peculiar to him. That thing is *love* to Christ.

***Knowledge, faith, hope, reverence, obedience are all marked features in a true Christian's character.*** But his picture would be very imperfect if you omitted his “love” to his divine Master. He not only knows, trusts, and obeys. He goes further than this—he loves. This peculiar mark of a true Christian is one that we find mentioned several times in the Bible. “Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Act 20:21) is an expression that many Christians are familiar with. Let it never be forgotten that the Holy Ghost mentions love in almost as strong terms as faith. Great as the danger is of him “that believeth not,” the danger of him that “loveth not” is equally great. Not believing and not loving are both steps to everlasting ruin.

***Hear what St. Paul says to the Corinthians:*** “If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha” (1Co 16:22). St. Paul allows no way of escape to the man who does not love Christ. He leaves him no loop-hole or excuse. A man may lack clear head-knowledge and yet be saved. He may fail in courage and be overcome by the fear of man like Peter. He may fall tremendously like David and yet rise again. But if a man does not love Christ, he is not in the way of life. The curse is yet upon him. He is on the broad road that leadeth to destruction.

***Hear what St. Paul says to the Ephesians:*** “Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity” (Eph 6:24). The apostle is here sending his good wishes and declaring his good will to all true Christians. Many of them, no doubt, he had never seen. Many of them in the early churches, we may be very sure, were weak in faith, knowledge, and self-denial. How, then, shall he describe them in sending his message? What words can he use that will not discourage the weaker brethren? He chooses a sweeping expression that exactly describes all true Christians under one common name. All had not attained to the same degree, whether in doctrine or practice. But all loved Christ in sincerity.

***Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ Himself says to the Jews:*** “If God were your Father, ye would love me” (Joh 8:42). He saw His misguided enemies satisfied with their spiritual condition, on the one single ground

that they were children of Abraham. He saw them, like many ignorant Christians of our own day, claiming to be God's children, for no better reasons than this, that they were circumcised and belonged to the Jewish church. He lays down the broad principle that no man is a child of God who does not love God's only begotten Son. No man has a right to call God "Father" who does not love Christ. Well would it be for many Christians if they were to remember that this mighty principle applies to them as well as to the Jews. No love to Christ, then no sonship to God!

*Hear once more what our Lord Jesus Christ said to the apostle Peter after He rose from the dead.* Three times He asked him the question, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" (Joh 21:15-17). The occasion was remarkable. He meant gently to remind His erring disciple of His thrice-repeated fall. He desired to call forth from him a new confession of faith, before publicly restoring to him his commission to feed the church. And what was the question that He asked him? He might have said, "Believest thou? Art thou converted? Art thou ready to confess Me? Wilt thou obey Me?" He uses none of these expressions. He simply says, "Lovest thou me?" This is the point He would have us know, on which a man's Christianity hinges. Simple as the question sounded, it was most searching. Plain and easy to be understood by the most unlearned poor man, it contains matter that tests the reality of the most advanced apostle. If a man truly loves Christ, all is right; if not, all is wrong.

**Would you know the secret of this peculiar feeling towards Christ that distinguishes the true Christian?** You have it in the words of St. John: "We love him, because he first loved us" (1Jo 4:19). That text no doubt applies specially to God the Father. But it is no less true of God the Son.

*A true Christian loves Christ for all He has done for him.* He has suffered in his stead and died for him on the cross. He has redeemed him from the guilt, the power, and the consequences of sin, by His blood. He has called him by His Spirit to self-knowledge, repentance, faith, hope, and holiness. He has forgiven all his many sins and blotted them out. He has freed him from the captivity of the world, the flesh, and the devil. He has taken him from the brink of hell, placed him in the narrow way, and set his face toward heaven. He has given him light instead of darkness, peace of conscience instead of uneasiness, hope instead of uncertainty, life instead of death. Can you wonder that the true Christian loves Christ?

*And he loves Him besides for all that He is still doing.* He feels that He is daily washing away his many shortcomings and infirmities and

pleading his soul's cause before God. He is supplying daily all the needs of his soul and providing him with an hourly provision of mercy and grace. He is daily leading him by His Spirit to a city of habitation, bearing with him when he is weak and ignorant, raising him up when he stumbles and falls, protecting him against his many enemies, preparing an eternal home for him in heaven. Can you wonder that the true Christian loves Christ?

Does the debtor in jail love the friend who unexpectedly and undeservedly pays all his debts, supplies him with fresh capital, and takes him into partnership with himself? Does the prisoner in war love the man who, at the risk of his own life, breaks through the enemies' lines, rescues him, and sets him free? Does the drowning sailor love the man who plunges into the sea, dives after him, catches him by the hair of his head, and by a mighty effort saves him from a watery grave? A very child can answer such questions as these. Just in the same way, and upon the same principles, a true Christian loves Jesus Christ.

(a) *This love to Christ is the inseparable companion of saving faith.* A faith of devils, a mere intellectual faith, a man may have without love, but not the faith that saves. Love cannot usurp the office of faith. It cannot justify. It does not join the soul to Christ. It cannot bring peace to the conscience. But where there is real justifying faith in Christ, there will always be heart-love to Christ. He that is really forgiven is the man who will really love (Luk 7:47). If a man has no love to Christ, you may be sure he has no faith.

(b) *Love to Christ is the mainspring of work for Christ.* There is little done for His cause on earth from sense of duty or from knowledge of what is right and proper. The heart must be interested before the hands will move and continue moving. Excitement may galvanize<sup>4</sup> the Christian's hands into a fitful and spasmodic<sup>5</sup> activity. But there will be no patient continuance in well-doing, no unwearied labor in missionary work at home or abroad without love. The nurse in a hospital may do her duty properly and well, may give the sick man his medicine at the right time, may feed him, minister to him, and attend to all his wants. But there is a vast difference between that nurse and a wife tending the sick-bed of a beloved husband, or a mother watching over a dying child. The one acts from a sense of duty, the other from affection and love. The one does her duty because she is paid for it; the other is what she is because of her heart. It is just the same in the matter of the service

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<sup>4</sup> **galvanize** – shock or excite into action.

<sup>5</sup> **spasmodic** – occurring in irregular bursts.

of Christ. The great workers of the church—the men who have led forlorn hopes in the mission-field<sup>6</sup> and turned the world upside down—have all been eminently lovers of Christ...

(c) *Love to Christ is the point that we ought specially to dwell upon in teaching religion to children.* Election, imputed righteousness, original sin, justification, sanctification, and even faith itself are matters that sometimes puzzle a child of tender years. But love to Jesus seems far more within reach of their understanding. That He loved them even to His death, and that they ought to love Him in return, is a creed which meets the span of their minds. How true it is that “out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise” (Mat 21:16). There are myriads of Christians who know every article of the Athanasian, Nicene, and Apostolic Creeds, and yet know less of real Christianity than a little child who only knows that he loves Christ.

(d) *Love to Christ is the common meeting point of believers of every branch of Christ’s church on earth.* Whether Episcopalian or Presbyterian, Baptist or Independent, Calvinist or Arminian, Methodist or Moravian, Lutheran or Reformed, Established or Free—here, at least, they are agreed. About forms and ceremonies, about church government and modes of worship, they often differ widely. But on one point, at any rate, they are united. They have all one common feeling towards Him on Whom they build their hope of salvation. They “love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity” (Eph 6:24).

(e) *Love to Christ will be the distinguishing mark of all saved souls in heaven.* The multitude that no man can number will all be of one mind. Old differences will be merged into one common feeling. Old doctrinal peculiarities, fiercely wrangled for upon earth, will be covered over by one common sense of debt to Christ. Luther and Zwingli<sup>7</sup> will no longer dispute. Wesley and Toplady<sup>8</sup> will no longer waste time in controversy. Churchmen and Dissenters<sup>9</sup> will no longer bite and devour one another. All will find themselves joining with one heart and voice in that hymn of praise, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God

<sup>6</sup> **forlorn hopes...mission fields** – desperate, but hopeful missions unlikely to succeed.

<sup>7</sup> **Martin Luther** (1483-1546) & **Ulrich Zwingli** (1484-1531) – leaders of the German and Swiss Reformations respectively, who battled over the meaning of the Lord’s Supper.

<sup>8</sup> **John Wesley** (1703-1791) & **Augustus Toplady** (1740-1778) – Wesley, the Anglican Arminian, often credited with founding the English Methodist movement, and Toplady, the Anglican Calvinist, bitterly argued in print over the doctrines of grace.

<sup>9</sup> **Churchmen and Dissenters** – supporters of the established Anglican church and its forms of worship and doctrine condemned those who refused to accept Anglican doctrine.



and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev 1:5-6).

The words that John Bunyan puts in the mouth of Mr. Standfast, as he stood in the river of death, are very beautiful. He said, “This river has been a terror to many; yes, the thoughts of it also have often frightened me. Now, methinks, I stand easy, my foot is fixed upon that upon which the feet of the priests that bare the ark of the covenant stood, while Israel went over this Jordan (Jos 3:17). The waters, indeed, are to the palate bitter, and to the stomach cold; yet the thoughts of what I am going to, and of the conduct that waits for me on the other side, doth lie as a glowing coal at my heart. I see myself now at the end of my journey; my toilsome days are ended. I am going now to see that Head that was crowned with thorns, and that Face that was spit upon for me. I have formerly lived by hearsay and faith; but now I go where I shall live by sight and shall be with Him in whose company I delight myself. I have loved to hear my Lord spoken of; and wherever I have seen the print of His shoe in the earth, there I have coveted to set my foot too. His name has been to me as a civet-box;<sup>10</sup> yes, sweeter than all perfumes. His voice to me has been most sweet; and His countenance I have more desired than they that have most desired the light of the sun!”<sup>11</sup> Happy are they that know something of this experience! He that would be in tune for heaven must know something of love to Christ. He that dies ignorant of that love had better never have been born.

From *Holiness: Its Nature, Hindrances, Difficulties and Roots*,  
available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

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**J. C. Ryle (1816-1900):** Bishop of the Anglican Church; born at Macclesfield, Cheshire County, England, UK.



The question before us (*Lovest thou me?*) is in our Savior’s view, a most important question. And were He now present, it would probably be the only question, or at least, the first question that He would ask each of us. If anyone present wished for admission to His church, His table, nothing more would be indispensably necessary to his admission than an ability to answer this question with truth in the affirmative. Nay more—this is, in effect, the only question that Christ will ask us at the Judgment Day, the question on our answer to which our destiny will depend.

—Edward Payson

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<sup>10</sup> **civet-box** – small container containing civet, a musky substance valued in Bunyan’s time for its use in making perfumes; so then, a container of precious and valuable perfume.

<sup>11</sup> John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

# WHY TRUE CHRISTIANS LOVE THE UNSEEN CHRIST

Thomas Vincent (1634-1678)

*Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love.—1 Peter 1:7-8*

**T**RUE CHRISTIANS LOVE CHRIST BECAUSE OF THE NEED THAT THEY HAVE OF HIM. Men love their necessary food, without which their bodies would starve with hunger. Men love their necessary raiment and habitations, without which in winter seasons their bodies would starve with cold. Men love their necessary friends, upon whom (under God) they have their dependence, and from whom they have all their subsistence.<sup>1</sup> But nothing in the world, or friend in the world, is so needful to the body as the Lord Jesus Christ is unto the soul. As the excellencies of the soul are far beyond the excellencies of the body, so the necessities of the soul are far beyond the necessities of the body—which necessities can be answered by none but Jesus Christ. And, therefore, true Christians do love Him.

At first conversion, when they were convinced of sin, awakened out of their carnal<sup>2</sup> security, oh, what need had they, and did they see they had, of Christ! They perceived themselves to be lost, and that it was Christ only that could save them. They felt the wounds of conscience, and it was Christ only that could heal them. They feared the wrath of a sin-revenging God, and it was Christ only that could deliver them. The remission,<sup>3</sup> reconciliation, and salvation that they had by Christ did lay the first foundation of a most endeared love unto Christ. And still, they perceive a continual need of Christ to procure daily pardon for them and to convey daily supplies of grace unto them. When they are dark, they have need of Christ to enlighten them; when they are dead, to quicken them; when they are straitened,<sup>4</sup> to enlarge them; when they are weak, to strengthen them; when they are sad, to comfort them; when they are tempted, to succor<sup>5</sup> them; when they are fallen, to raise them; when they are in doubts, to resolve them; when they are

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<sup>1</sup> **subsistence** – means by which one maintains life.

<sup>2</sup> **carnal** – fleshly; unspiritual.

<sup>3</sup> **remission** – forgiveness of sins.

<sup>4</sup> **straitened** – restricted; confined.

<sup>5</sup> **succor** – strengthen.

under fears, to encourage them; when they stagger, to establish them; when they wander, to restore them. Christ, and none but Christ, can do all this, and more than this, for them. And therefore, because of the need and usefulness of Christ, true Christians love Him.

**True Christians love an unseen Christ because of the loveliness of Christ.** [His] loveliness, though it be not and cannot here be seen by the eye of the body, yet it is evident unto the eye of faith. See the description that is given of Christ, the Beloved, by His spouse, the church. The daughters of Jerusalem there enquire of the lovesick spouse, “What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?” (Song 5:9). Hereupon the spouse gives a description: “My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand,” and after she had set forth his graces, beauties, and excellent accomplishments in metaphors taken from beauties in the several parts of man’s body (5:11-14), she concludes, “his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem” (5:15-16). The spouse is here acknowledged to be the fairest<sup>6</sup> amongst women. And not only by the daughters of Jerusalem, but her beloved, who had a more curious<sup>7</sup> eye, both commends her loveliness and admires it: “Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem...Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me...Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?” (6:4-5, 10).

But what beauty is there, then, in the Beloved? If the church be beautiful beyond all other of the children of men, how beautiful is Jesus Christ, from Whom the church derives all its comeliness? He is said to be “white and ruddy<sup>8</sup>”; that shows the beauty of His face. His countenance is said to be “as Lebanon” and like the lofty cedars thereof; that shows the majesty of His face. His mouth is said to be “most sweet”; and sweet it is indeed, in regard of the gracious words that proceed from it—no doctrine so sweet as Christ’s doctrine, no precepts so sweet as Christ’s precepts, no promises so sweet as Christ’s promises.

But to sum up all excellencies and perfections in a word, He is said to be “altogether lovely.” There is no person or thing in the world that is most lovely, which can properly be called *altogether* lovely. Many

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<sup>6</sup> **fairest** – most beautiful.

<sup>7</sup> **curious** – careful.

<sup>8</sup> **ruddy** – healthy, reddish complexion.

defects may be found in the most amiable<sup>9</sup> persons, and much insufficiency may be found in the most desirable things; but Christ is “altogether lovely”: unlovely in no respect, there being no spot or blemish, no defect or imperfection to be found in Him. He is lovely in every respect; there is an incomparable and transcendent<sup>10</sup> amiableness in Christ’s person in every regard.

In the person of Christ, the human nature and the divine nature are in conjunction:<sup>11</sup> He is most lovely in regard of both. His human nature is compounded of body and soul. His body is most beautiful, a most glorious beauty and luster is put upon it. Whatever it was in His state of humiliation, be sure it has a glorious beauty now in His state of exaltation. It is called a glorious body (Phi 3:21). If the face of Moses did shine with resplendent glory after his conversing forty days with God in the Mount Sinai that was below, how does the body of Christ shine, which has been above sixteen hundred years in the Mount Zion that is above? I am persuaded that Christ’s body is the most beautiful of all visible creatures.

But the beauty of Christ’s soul does excel. No creature whatever has such shining excellencies as are in the soul of Christ. All the excellencies that are or ever were in any creature, are like a feather [when] laid in the balance with the exceeding weight of His glorious excellencies and perfections. Christ excelled the most excellent men that ever lived as to spiritual endowments when He was here upon the earth. He excelled Moses in meekness, Solomon in wisdom, Job in patience. And how much does He excel now that He is in heaven? He excels not only the spirits of just men made perfect, but also the most glorious and holy angels, which never sinned. If any creatures have wisdom, it is but a beam: Christ is the sun. If they have goodness, it is but a drop: in Christ is the ocean. If they have holiness, it is but a spark or dark shadow: Christ is the brightness of His Father’s glory. If they have the Spirit, they have Him but in some measure: the Spirit is given to Christ without measure (Joh 3:34).

Christ is most lovely in His manhood, so nearly united unto His Godhead—and how lovely is He in His Godhead! As God, He is equal in all glorious excellencies with the Father. Christ’s Godhead implies excellency of being: He calls Himself “I AM” (Joh 8:58).<sup>12</sup> [It implies]

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<sup>9</sup> **amiable** – worthy to be loved.

<sup>10</sup> **transcendent amiableness** – superior loveliness.

<sup>11</sup> **in conjunction** – joined together.

<sup>12</sup> **“I AM THAT I AM”** is the sacred name of God and His eternal self-sufficient being in the Old Testament (see Exodus 3:14). In Hebrew, it consists of four letters: YHWH, which

excellency of glory, therefore called “the Lord of glory” (1Co 2:8) and “the King of glory.” “Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in” (Psa 24:7). This is interpreted by some to be spoken of Christ’s ascension, and the angels and saints making way for His triumphant entrance and possession of His heavenly palace.

Many descriptions are given in the New Testament of this lovely person. I shall mention only one: “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell” (Col 1:15-19). If we read, believe, and consider this great description of Christ, we must needs see and say that Christ is most excellent and amiable, and that no beloved is like to the Beloved of true Christians. Therefore, it is that true Christians love Christ because of His loveliness.

**True Christians love Christ because of His love that He bears to them.** He loves them with a first love and with a free love. He loves them with a tender and compassionate love, with an active or doing love, with a passive or suffering love. His love is infinite, without bounds or limits; it is superlative, without comparison; transcendent, beyond comprehension; everlasting, without change, and which will have no end or conclusion. He loved them when they were polluted in their sins and washed them with His own blood. He loved them when they were naked in their souls and clothed them with the robes of His righteousness. He loves them in their sickness and sorrows and is their Comforter. He loves them in their wants<sup>13</sup> and straits<sup>14</sup> and is their Benefactor. He loves them in life and is the life of their souls. He loves them at death and is the stay of their hearts; and He loves them after death and will be their portion forever.

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is termed *tetragrammaton*, from the Greek word meaning “four letters.” “Yah-weh” is the pronunciation most widely accepted by Hebrew scholars. The Hebrews considered this name too sacred to be uttered by man. They filled in the consonants with vowels to make *Jehovah*. In some English Bible translations, the word is spelled with all capital letters (LORD) to indicate the use of the tetragrammaton in the original.

<sup>13</sup> **wants** – needs.

<sup>14</sup> **straits** – bad situations.

There is great reason that true Christians should love Christ because of His loveliness; and there is further reason that they should love Him because of His love, especially when both are incomparable, both are incomprehensible.

From *The True Christian's Love for the Unseen Christ*,  
available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

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**Thomas Vincent (1634-1678):** English Nonconformist Puritan preacher; born in Hertford, England, UK.



1. *The love of Christians unto Christ is a grace wrought in their hearts by the Spirit.* It is a flower most sweet and fragrant; but there is no seed of it in the nature of any man since the Fall—it is planted in the soul by the Spirit of God. Love to Christ is a divine spark that comes down from above, a fire that is kindled by the breath of the Lord, Whose essence is love.

2. *The ground of this love to Christ* is the discovery and believing apprehensions of Christ's loveliness and love. There must be first a discovery of Christ as a suitable object for love, and not a bare notion of this, but believing apprehensions of it: that Christ is infinitely lovely, superlatively excellent; and that His love is matchless and transcendent towards the children of men; that there is a treasury in Him, and a storehouse of all graces, and the most needful and rich supplies. Otherwise, there will be no going forth of the heart in love unto Him.

3. *The actings of Christians' love to Christ* is in their desires after union unto and communion with Christ. It is the nature of love to desire union to the object beloved, especially of this love to Christ. And this union being attained, the desires are after communion with Christ, converse [*conversation*] and fellowship with Him. No converse is so desirable as with the persons whom we most dearly love. And this communion being attained, there is chief complacency therein. The soul sweetly rests and reposes itself in Christ and rejoices in His presence and love.

4. *The accompaniment of this love*, which true Christians have unto Christ, is a yielding and dedication of themselves unto His will and service. Lovers give themselves unto those whom they love. This accompanies the marriage union; and such as love Christ, they are espoused and joined unto Christ. They give themselves unto Christ to be His and wholly at His disposal, as the wife gives herself unto the disposal of her husband.—*Thomas Vincent*

The Judge Himself has expressly declared that no man, who does not love Him more than he loves any other object, can be His disciple.—*Edward Payson*

If there is a joyful being in the world, it is the true believer in Christ Jesus. There is everything to contribute to this joy. If our divine-human Surety drained the cup of wrath, what is left for us but the overflowing cup of love? "Whom having not seen, you love; in whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, you rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Rejoice, then, in the Lord!—*Octavius Winslow*

# MOTIVES TO LOVE CHRIST

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.—James 1:12*

**I**F all those that love Christ are to receive a crown of life at His hands, what more natural improvement follows from it than to exhort and persuade all to love to Christ? ...Surely here is motive enough to persuade anyone to strive after love to Christ, if such a glorious and never-fading [crown] shall be bestowed on the lovers of Him. But we shall offer some other motives to persuade all to this duty:

**First. The first and greatest motive is the loveliness of Christ.** As all the loveliness that is to be seen in heaven and earth is only the reflection of the rays of His lovely glory, so there is scarce anything that is glorious, sweet, beautiful, and amiable, but what is used to set the beauty of Christ. What is more glorious to look upon among bodies that we behold than the sun, that bright orb that enlightens heaven and earth with its rays? Christ is called the Sun of Righteousness, and He is a sun to whom our sun in the heavens is as darkness. He is called the Bright and the Morning Star; so, for His innocence, His sweet condescension, love, and mercy, He is called a Lamb, although He is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah.

He is called the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley. Sharon, being a delightful and pleasant land, bore the sweetest roses, and the lily of the valley excelling all other lilies for beauty, sweetness, and excellent salutary virtue. He is represented thus to flowers because they are pleasant to behold, beautiful to the eye, and pleasing to the smell. He is compared to a rose and lily because they are the chief of flowers for beauty and sweetness; He is compared to the rose of Sharon and lily of the valley because they are the chief and most excellent of all roses and lilies.

What kind of rose and lily is the Son of God, the blessed Jesus; how wonderful and astonishing that God the Son should compare Himself to a rose and lily! What kind of rose and lily is here! How sweet, how beautiful, how fragrant! Here is too great a beauty, too divine a loveliness and heavenly fragrance to belong to any creature. Certainly, this lovely rose and lily has divine perfections. Here is all the loveliness in

the universe contained in this rose. Yes, here are the beauties and glories of Jehovah Himself in this lily; this flower is certainly no creature, but the Creator. Here, O believers, O lovers of Christ, is a rose for you to be ravished with the fragrance of it, for your eyes to be delighted with the infinite beauty of, for you to be delighted to all eternity in the enjoyment of. This rose and lily is the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person, which is so amiable and fragrant that it is the eternal and infinite delight of the Father Himself.

This infinitely beautiful rose, this spotless and fragrant lily, was once despised with the loathsome spittle of wicked men, and was torn and rent by their rage, and it was for you, O believers. The vials of God's wrath against your sins were poured out upon it.

Here is a sweet bundle of myrrh for you to lie in your bosom forever. He is like the apple tree among the trees of the wood. You may sit down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit will be sweet to your taste.

**Second. Consider for motive the excellent effects of love to Christ.** It makes the soul to be of an excellent disposition; it is of a transforming nature. It brings on the soul some of the loveliness of the Person beloved and exceedingly to soften and sweeten the mind, and to make it meek, humble, charitable, and full of brotherly love. Love to Christ, if it be ardent<sup>1</sup> and lively, transforms the soul very much into love and destroys envy and malice of every kind and softens and sweetens every action.

It makes the soul in love with religion<sup>2</sup> and holiness and sweetens obedience and mortification.<sup>3</sup> Earthly and temporal love makes men glad of an opportunity to labor and spend themselves for the person beloved. They love to deny themselves for them, [and] it takes away the force of pain and turns it into pleasure. So much more doth heavenly love, or love to Christ, make all that they do for Christ pleasant and easy, although they spend and are spent for Him. It extracts honey from repentance and mortification.

Of such an excellent nature and tendency is love to Christ. It makes as great a difference in the soul as there is upon the face of the earth in the dead of winter when there is nothing but clouds, cold storms, rain, hail, and snow, and in the spring or summer when all things look green and pleasant. Before, the soul hated everything that is truly excellent

<sup>1</sup> **ardent** – strong emotion; passionate.

<sup>2</sup> **religion** – biblical Christianity.

<sup>3</sup> **mortification** – putting indwelling sin to death by faith in Christ and the power of the Spirit.



and loved all that is abominable; but now the soul is transformed, is lovely itself, and is in love with everything else that is truly so. And it not only makes duty easy, and repentance and mortification pleasant, but it sweetens troubles and crosses themselves because the Christian knows that they are ordered to him by the Person Whom he dearly loves, and Who dearly loves him. How easily can we bear things that come from those we love! These are the excellent effects, and this is the usefulness of love to Christ...Afflictions, though sharp in themselves, yet coming to the believer through the Lord Jesus, contract a sweetness from Him. Christ is infinitely sweet in Himself; [He] has such an abundance of sweetness, that nothing, however bitter it is in itself, yet in Christ, it loses its bitter nature and becomes sweet. The afflictions of believers, though sharp in themselves, are yet dipped in the love of Jesus Christ; and by this means, all their venom is lost, and instead of being poison are made of a most health-giving nature. The pills are bitter in themselves, but they are dipped in Jesus' love. This consideration may well render them most sweet and pleasant. If we can but discover the love of Christ in them, [it] is sufficient to give a pleasure to the mind that shall overcome all the sorrow.

**Third. Consider the pleasantness of a life of love to Christ.** A life of love, if it be from rational principles, is the most pleasant life in the world. Hatred, malice, and revenge are the greatest disturbers of the pleasures of the mind and fill it with uneasiness; but in the soul where rational love reigns, there is always pleasure and delight, for love is the principle of all sorrow.

But especially must a life of love to Christ be very pleasant, above all other kinds of living. Because as Christ is of all things most excellent, so is the love of Him a more excellent kind of love than any other; and the more excellent and refined the love is, the greater and purer is the pleasure of it.

There is no love so reasonable as love to Christ. Some love those things that are not truly lovely, [and they] love from false grounds. Yes, some love those things that are above all things hateful. Now from such a love as this can arise no true pleasure, inasmuch as it is without a reason or foundation and at last will end in bitterness. But the love of Christ is the love of that which is truly above all things excellent and lovely, and therefore the pleasures that result from it must be solid, real, substantial, and never-fading.

If any godly man's life is unpleasant to him, it must be only because his love to Christ is but small and not vigorous and active enough because it lies dormant and is not frequently put into exercise; for it [is]

utterly impossible but that those [who] live in the lively exercise of love to Him should have those sweet meditations, as to make his life far from unpleasant.

Those that have a vehement<sup>4</sup> love to any person can with pleasure spend their time in thinking of that person and of his perfections and actions. So with what great delight may [those] that love Christ with an active<sup>4</sup> love spend their thoughts upon His glories! With what pleasure may they meditate upon those infinite perfections that He is possessed of, and which make Him lovely in their eyes. How must it please them to find out new beauties and glories continually, which they saw not before! For the excellencies of Christ are infinite, and we may make new discoveries to all eternity, and yet not have discovered all. How doth it fill the soul with a kind of rapture when it has discovered something more of excellency in Him Who is the object of his highest love!

If men have a dear love to any of their fellow creatures, they desire to see them yet more excellent; they delight to see them attain to new perfections. But now those that are the dear lovers of Christ, they have the pleasure of thinking that He has all possible excellence already. There is no room for desiring that He should be yet more excellent because there is no excellence or beauty, nor any degree of excellence that they can possibly think of, but what He possesses already. So that they have no new beauties to desire for Christ, but only new beauties to discover in Him. Now what a pleasure must it raise in those that love Christ to think that He is so perfectly amiable. This is a peculiar delight that is raised from no other love but love to Christ.

With what pleasure may he think of the perfections of His divine nature: of His immense greatness, of His eternity, power, wisdom, etc. With what delight may he think [of] Him, [Whom] he loves with his whole heart and soul, as God as well as man, so great that all the nations of the world are to Him as the drop of the bucket and small dust of the balance; so powerful that He weighs the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance, and takes up the isles as a very little thing; so wise that He charges His angels with folly; so holy that the heavens are unclean in His sight! With what pleasure may he think that the object of his highest love has made the world by His power and wisdom, that the sun, moon, and stars are the work of His fingers, and that He rules all.

How sweet will the thoughts of the perfections of His human nature raise when he thinks of His innocence, condescension, humility, meekness, patience, and charity, the sight of which made the woman so to

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<sup>4</sup> **vehement** – intense.

cry out, “Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked” (Luk 11:27).

With what joy may the lovers of Christ think and meditate of what He has done for them. When men dearly love any person, with what joy do they catch at<sup>5</sup> kindnesses and expressions of love from them; with what pleasure will they think it over again. So with what inexpressible joy may those that love Christ think of His bowing the heavens and coming down in the form of a servant: of His lying in a manger, of His suffering the reproach of men, of His agony and bloody sweat, of His dying on the cross for their sakes. How pleasing must it be to read over the history of all those wonderful [things] that their well-beloved has done for them while on earth, as it is recorded in the Scriptures, and to think that Christ has done all this for him—that [Christ] was born for his sake, lived for his sake, sweat blood for his sake, and died for his sake. This must [necessarily] beget an uncommon delight!

With what pleasure may the Christian’s soul think on Christ in His exalted state. We love to see those whom we truly love highly honored and exalted; so those that ardently love Christ may sweetly spend their time in meditating on Christ triumphing over His enemies, of His glorious ascending to heaven, of His being made head over all things to the church, of His being crowned with a crown of great glory, of His coming to judge the world at the conflagration.<sup>6</sup>

**The love of Christ is far more pleasant than any other love upon these following accounts:**

1. *Christ is far more amiable than any other object in the world.*
2. *No other love is of so pure, heavenly, and divine a nature as the love of Christ is.* Therefore, no other love can raise such a divine and heavenly and exalted pleasure.
3. *All that love Christ are certain that they are loved again.*<sup>7</sup> Herein is the pleasure of love: to be loved again. If love be not mutual, it is a torment and not a pleasure. But he that knows he loves Christ, knows Christ loves him with a [love] far higher and dearer.
4. *Nothing can deprive those that love Christ either of present communion with or future enjoyment of the Person loved.* Now it is not so in other kinds of love, but they are full of perplexities for fear of being deprived of enjoyment. There are a thousand accidents that may spoil all, and

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<sup>5</sup> catch at – receive.

<sup>6</sup> conflagration – Day of the Lord (see 2Pe 3:7-13).

<sup>7</sup> again – in return.

death certainly will separate them; but Christ will be enjoyed to all eternity, and all the world cannot hinder it. Christ will receive them into His closest embrace, and in His arms shall they rest forevermore in spite of all the world.

5. *The union between Christ and those that love Him is closer and the communion more intimate than between any other lovers.* The believers have the pleasure to think that He Whom they love has also loved them so well as to receive [them] so near to Himself as to make [them] His bone and His flesh. The believer is joined to Christ and is become one with Him. How must this be to those who love Him in truth! Love naturally desires a close and inseparable union and intimate communion, but there is no such near or intimate conversation between any other lovers, as between Christ and the Christian.

6. *There is no other love so advantageous as love to Christ, and therefore none so pleasant.* Love is sweet when the ones loving each other enjoy one another in prosperous circumstances. Now Christ is already crowned with glory, and He will crown those that love Him with glory too, so that they shall [be with] each other eternally in the greatest glory. So that upon these reasons and many others that might be mentioned, the love of Christ is [by] far the most delightful love in the world.

In short, to sum up the whole, the love of Christ tends to fill the soul with an inexpressible sweetness. It sweetens every thought and makes every meditation pleasant. It brings a divine calm upon the mind and spreads a heavenly fragrance like Mary's box of ointment. It bedews<sup>8</sup> the soul with the dew of heaven, begets a bright sunshine, and [spreads] the beginnings of glory and happiness in embryo.<sup>9</sup> All the world smiles upon such a soul as loves Christ: the sun, moon and stars, fields and trees do seem to salute him. Such a mind is like a little heaven upon earth.

From "Fragment: Application on Love to Christ," in *Jonathan Edwards Sermons*, ed. Wilson H. Kimnach (New Haven, CT: The Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University, 1722–1723), James 1:12.

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**Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758):** American Congregational preacher and theologian; born in East Windsor, Connecticut Colony, USA.




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<sup>8</sup> **bedews** – covers as with drops of dew.

<sup>9</sup> **in embryo** – early stages that will be fully developed in the glories of eternity with Christ.

# THE GREAT TEST OF SONSHIP

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

*Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.—John 8:42*

**T**HE Fatherhood of God is to a special people, chosen from before the foundation of the world and adopted and regenerated in due time through His grace...

**Love to Christ is the great test of sonship to God.** My dear hearer, if you do not love Christ, you are no child of God, for if you were, you would love what your Father loves. Your nature, descended from God, would run in the same channel; and since He loves Christ supremely and above all things, so would you love Jesus Christ with all your heart beyond all the world. If you were a child of God, you would love Jesus, for you would see God in Jesus. He says, "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me" (Joh 14:11); and inasmuch as you are a child of God, you would know your Father and perceive Him in the Son, in Whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily (Col 2:9). He is the express image of His person, and the brightness of His Father's glory (Heb 1:3); and as the child loves his father, so would you love the Godhead in Jesus Christ. It would be impossible for you to do otherwise. Nay, not only the Godhead, but even the humanity of our Lord would win your love; for God loves holiness in man, especially in the man Christ Jesus, and so must we. All the qualities of His human nature were brilliant with His divine holiness, and therefore will be sure to command your love if you love the Father.

Every man loves that which is like himself. If you were born of God, you would love God; but Jesus Christ is God, and therefore you would love Him. If you were born of God, you would be holy, true, loving and tender, and Jesus is all that, and so you would love Him...There must be love to Christ in the soul if you are like Christ, which you are if you are a child of God.

**If you are a child of God, you must love Christ because of His essential divinity.** Notice in the text, "I proceeded forth and came from God." I do not understand that expression; nobody does...We cannot enter into the springs of the sea, nor can we enter into the essence of deity, or the relationships of the blessed Persons of the Trinity...Jesus

Christ is the Son of God, by what we are accustomed to call *eternal filiation*, or what the text calls *proceeding* from Him. Therefore, because of that, being divine and proceeding from the divine Father in some mysterious sense, He is Himself to be devoutly adored, and if we are the children of God, we must love the Lord Jesus.

**The text adds that we shall also love Him because of His mission.** “I...came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.” If we love God, we must love that which comes from God. I know when I left the village where I was first pastor, and where I had loved the people much and they had loved me, I used to say if I saw even a dog that came from that parish, I should be glad to see him; for I felt a love to everything and everybody coming from that spot...How much more should we love Christ because He came from God!...

**And then, remember, while Jesus came as our Father’s messenger, what a message He brought**—pardon for sin, restoration from the Fall, acceptance in the Beloved, and eternal life and glory! Oh, when He comes from the Father, comes for the Father, and comes with a message meant to lead us to the Father, we who are the children of God must love Him for all these reasons. It is not possible that you can be a child of God and not love the Christ whom the Father has anointed, the Messiah Whom the Father hath sent, the Jesus whom the Father has made to be the Savior, the Emmanuel, the God with us (Mat 1:23)...

**That He came not of Himself is another reason for love.** When a man lives only to serve himself, our love begins to dry up for lack of secret springs. But when we perceive that Jesus Christ did not come of Himself, but was sent of the Father, that His aims and objects were not for Himself in any degree but entirely for the Father and for us, our heart must go out towards Him.

I might thus continue, but there is no need for it, to show you that you must love Jesus. So, I close with the application. Lend me your ears and hearts [for] a few minutes.

**If it be so that love to Christ is essential and is the main test of sonship, come, brethren, do we love Him or not?** Now, put the question all round. I know some will say, “Love Him? Ay, that I do.” Yes, but I will still ask you, for my Lord asked Peter three times, you know, “Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?” and I do not suppose you are better than Peter. So, I must repeat the question, though you may answer it as quickly as he did, for it will not hurt you to answer aright three times,

but it would hurt to answer falsely once. So, let us put the question home<sup>1</sup>—Do you love Jesus?

**If I love Him, then I trust Him and lean on Him with all my weight.** “Ah, I do that; blessed be His name, I know I do.” Can you not speak with assurance as to that point? Tell me, then, have you any other hope besides that which springs from His dear cross and wounded side? If you have, you do not love Him; but if your trust rests wholly and alone on Him, there are the beginnings of love in you...

**If you love Him, you will keep His Word.** That is the next point. He says, “If a man love me, he will keep my words” (Joh 14:23), that is to say, he will reverence what Jesus said and endeavor to learn from His teaching. You will believe what He says and desire to know its meaning. Now are you quite sure that you pay reverence to the words of Christ? How about your neglected Bible? How about the parts of Scripture that you have never wished to understand because you were afraid it was a little different from the articles of your church or the creed of your family? That does *not* look like reverence to Christ’s Word. My dear friend, let me put the question very pointedly. Do you want to know what Christ taught? Are you willing to believe all He reveals? Do you ask the Holy Spirit to lead you into the things of Christ? For remember, he who breaks one of the least of our Lord’s commandments and teaches men so, the same shall be least in the kingdom of heaven (Mat 5:19); and would you wish to be that?

**Another test of love to Christ is this: “If ye love me, keep my commandments.”** It is not merely hearing His Word, for the man did that who built his house upon the sand. But the Lord said, “He that heareth my word, and *doeth* it, is like a man that built his house on a rock” (*see* Mat 7:24). “*Doeth it,*” “*Doeth it!*” Do you obey Christ? If you do not, you do not love Him. If the commands of Jesus are treated by you as matters of no importance, then your heart is not with Him. The child is to love his father, but the command by which his love is to be tested is “Children, obey your parents in all things” (Col 3:20). So with Jesus. If you love Him, you will obey Him. Now search your hearts and look at your lives, and are there not some points that might make you question? At any rate, I think there are many matters that should make us pray, “Lord, thou knowest all things, and therefore thou knowest all my sins and all my failures, but still thou knowest that I love thee; deliver me from sin, and let me not grieve thee anymore.”

**Now, apply that text to your heart in another form. If you love Christ,**

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<sup>1</sup> put...home – put the question to your heart.

**you will imitate Him.** It is the nature of love to be imitative; the sincerest form of admiration is imitation. If you love Jesus, you will labor to be like Him; I am sure you will. Are you trying to be Christ-like? You perceive in yourself many things that are not in Christ; do you long to get rid of those things? And you see in Jesus Christ many excellencies that you have not yet reached. Are you pressing towards them? Then I know you love Him. But if there is no imitation, there is no love.

**Love to Christ may also be judged of by love to His people.** He who loves Jesus is sure to love all others whose hearts burn with the like flame. How is it with you? "Well," say you, "I love some of the brethren." Yes, and so do the publicans and sinners love some of them. Certain of God's people are so very sweet in their tempers and excellent in their natural dispositions that I should think the most wicked person in the world must love them. But the test is to love them for Jesus' sake, even though you cannot help seeing their mistakes and faults.

"I love the saints," says one; "at least, I love all of my denomination." That, also, is very easy, for the Sadducees loved the Sadducees, and the Pharisees loved the Pharisees, but the thing is to love God's people, though you fear that they are in error upon certain points, and though you cannot agree with them in some of their views, and think they dishonor God by certain failures. The Christian loves all who are in Christ, not because of their soundness in the faith, but because of their union to Jesus. Come, then, do you love the Lord's people because they are His? "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1Jo 3:14).

**And, dear friend, you may judge again whether you love Christ by this: do you sympathize with His objects?** Whenever we love another, we begin to love the things that He loves. Christ desires to see this world brought to His feet. Do you wish to see Him King over the nations? He desires to gather out to Himself a chosen people. Are you seeking to bring in His wanderers? He delights to save the sons of men. Do you wish to see them saved? Do your thoughts, wishes, and desires run in a groove with those of Jesus? If so, you love Him.

**Again, do you serve His cause?** For the love that never leads to action is poor love. Is it love at all? The affection that can be contented without doing anything for the beloved object is so base a thing that it were a shame to degrade that golden name of love by applying it to such a miserable counterfeit. *Love Jesus!* And yet you have never taught a little child His name? *Love Jesus!* And you are an orator, and yet you never stand up to proclaim His gospel? *Love Jesus!* And your gold lies cankering, your silver is tarnished, and you give none of these to His work?



*Love Jesus!* And it never costs you a night's unrest or an hour's distress of mind because His kingdom does not come? I thank God I do not understand your love and hope I never may. May God give you a better love than this, the love that works and shows itself in deeds.

**If you love Jesus you desire to be with Him, and you are very glad of every opportunity of having special fellowship with Him.** I know if you love Him, you will not be happy to live a day without Him; you will feel ill at ease if He is gone but for an hour. If you love Jesus, oh, how you pant for the time when you will see Him face to face. If you love Him, there are seasons when you become sick of love after Him,<sup>2</sup> when you feel as if to die was a fleabite or a nothing, if you might but behold His face. How often when you have been to the house of God and heard a sermon that has carried you near to Jesus, you have been ready to say like Simeon, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation" (Luk 2:29-30). When you have had to go back into the world again, you have almost felt unhappy to think you were bound to linger in this far off country, and you could only feel satisfied by saying, "Sun of my soul, abide with me, for this world is dark and drear without Thee."

I pass the question round again. Is there anyone here who dares not say, "I do love the Savior"? Then, my dear friend, I beseech you to look that matter in the face, for if you do not love Christ heartily and sincerely, then are you none of His, and you are none of God's, but you are a child of Satan. "Well," says one, "it would not yield me any comfort to know that." No, and I do not want you to find any comfort, for comfort now would be deadly to you. A good physician does not always look to the immediate ease of his patient; he has his eye on the cure. I want you to be uncomfortable until Jesus comforts you. I want you to be ashamed of not loving Christ until you become unhappy about it. I beg you to stand by [the foot of] Calvary's cross, and look up and see Jesus bleeding and dying, and then say, "He has done all this, and yet I do not love Him." I wish you would go into the Garden of Gethsemane and see the sweat drops bloody fall upon the frozen ground, and hear His cries and groans for sinners, and then say, "And yet I do not love Him." I beg you to look at Him taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb with the image of death stamped on His glorious face, a death that He endured out of pure love to His enemies, and then I would have you see if you are vile enough to say, "And yet I do not love Him." I beg you in spirit to follow Him in His resurrection and to see Him as He

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<sup>2</sup> **sick of love** – overwhelming longing, or fainting, for more of Christ's love.

breathes peace over His disciples, and then see if you dare say, “I do not love Him.” I would wish you to see Him, by faith, rising as He ascends into glory, and a cloud receives Him, and then I would like you to put your hands to your brow, and feel as if your heart must burst, while you say, “Yet I do not love Him.” I would have you see Him sitting on His throne in all His glory, adored by myriads<sup>3</sup> of the blessed, with every harp string in heaven thrilling out His praise as He sits at the right hand of the Father, and the Father takes delight in Him. Amid that splendor, I would wish you to stand and begin to smite upon your breast, and say, “And yet, alas, this hard heart does not love Him.” How I wish you would get to your chamber and pour your soul out in a flood of tears, to think that by-and-by He will come to judge the world in righteousness and to be admired of them that believe, and you, unless you are renewed in heart, will have to stand amongst that mighty throng that shall surround His great white throne, and then you will have to weep and wail and wish you never had been born, while the dire thought will flash through you, “I do not love Him, but He is come to judge me, and I am far off from Him, unsaved, uncleansed in His blood.” I entreat you to think of it now, that you may not have to realize it hereafter. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, O thou unloving heart, and thou shalt be saved from thine unloving spirit and taught to esteem Him Whom to love is the best evidence of life eternal.

From a sermon delivered on Lord’s Day morning, October 3, 1875,  
at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

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**Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892):** Influential English Baptist preacher; born at Kelvedon, Essex, England, UK.



There is a fearful chasm in the heart that has no love to Christ. No knowledge, no gifts, no outward service, no costly ointment can come in the place of love. Without a heart of love to Christ we are not only destitute of all that is necessary to prepare us for heaven but of all that is necessary to serve Him on the earth. There is no love to the gospel where there is no love to Christ. There is no love of duty where there is no love to Christ. There is no tranquility in trials, no peace of conscience, no joy in the Holy Ghost, no life of faith and godliness where there is no love to Christ. There is nothing that gives such beauty to human conduct as that it is done in honor of Christ or such beauty to the character of man or woman as that it is radiant with love to Christ.

—*Gardiner Spring*

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<sup>3</sup> **myriads** – countless numbers.

# MARKS OF LOVE TO CHRIST

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

**L**ET me show...*the peculiar marks by which love to Christ makes itself known.* The point is one of vast importance. If there is no salvation without love to Christ, if he that does not love Christ is in peril of eternal condemnation, it becomes us all to find out very distinctly what we know about this matter. Christ is in heaven, and we are upon earth. In what way shall the man be discerned that loves Him?

Happily, the point is one that it is not very hard to settle. How do we know whether we love any person here upon earth? In what way and manner does love show itself between people in this world—between husband and wife, between parent and child, between brother and sister, between friend and friend? Let these questions be answered by common sense and observation, and I ask no more. Let these questions be honestly answered, and the knot before us is untied. How does affection show itself among us?

(a) **If we love a person, *we like to think about him.*** We do not need to be reminded of him. We do not forget his name, his appearance, his character, his opinions, his tastes, his position, or his occupation. He comes up before our mind's eye many times in the day. Though perhaps far distant, he is often present in our thoughts. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! Christ "dwells in his heart," and is thought of more or less every day (Eph 3:17). The true Christian does not need to be reminded that he has a crucified Master. He often thinks of Him. He never forgets that He has a day, a cause, and a people, and that of His people he is one. Affection is the real secret of a good memory in religion. No worldly man can think much about Christ, unless Christ is pressed upon his notice, because he has no affection for Him. The true Christian has thoughts about Christ every day that he lives for this one simple reason: he loves Him.

(b) **If we love a person, *we like to hear about him.*** We find a pleasure in listening to those who speak of him. We feel an interest in any report that others make of him. We are all attention when others talk about him and describe his ways, his sayings, his doings, and his plans. Some may hear him mentioned with utter indifference, but our own hearts bound within us at the very sound of his name. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The true Christian delights to

hear something about his Master. He likes those sermons best which are full of Christ. He enjoys that society most in which people talk of the things that are Christ's. I have read of an old Welsh believer, who used to walk several miles every Sunday to hear an English clergyman preach, though she did not understand a word of English. She was asked why she did so. She replied that this clergyman named the name of Christ so often in his sermons that it did her good. She loved even the name of her Savior.

(c) **If we love a person, *we like to read about him.*** What intense pleasure a letter from an absent husband gives to a wife, or a letter from an absent son to his mother. Others may see little [that is] worth notice in the letter. They can scarcely take the trouble to read it through. But those who love the writer see something in the letter that no one else can. They carry it with them as a treasure. They read it over and over again. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The true Christian delights to read the Scriptures because they tell him about his beloved Savior. It is no wearisome task with him to read them. He rarely needs reminding to take his Bible with him when he goes a journey. He cannot be happy without it. And why is all this? It is because the Scriptures testify of Him whom his soul loves, even Christ.

(d) **If we love a person, *we like to please him.*** We are glad to consult his tastes and opinions, to act upon his advice, and do the things that he approves. We even deny ourselves to meet his wishes, abstain from things that we know he dislikes, and learn things to which we are not naturally inclined because we think it will give him pleasure. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The true Christian studies to please Him by being holy both in body and spirit. Show him anything in his daily practice that Christ hates, and he will give it up. Show him anything that Christ delights in, and he will follow after it. He does not murmur at Christ's requirements as being too strict and severe, as the children of the world do. To him, Christ's commandments are not grievous, and Christ's burden is light. And why is all this? Simply because he loves Him.

(e) **If we love a person, *we like his friends.*** We are favorably inclined to them, even before we know them. We are drawn to them by the common tie of common love to the same person. When we meet them, we do not feel that we are altogether strangers. There is a bond of union between us. They love the person that we love, and that alone is an introduction. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The true Christian regards all Christ's friends as his friends, members of the same body, children of the same family, soldiers in the same

army, travelers to the same home. When he meets them, he feels as if he had long known them. He is more at home with them in a few minutes than he is with many worldly people after an acquaintance of several years. And what is the secret of all this? It is simply affection to the same Savior and love to the same Lord.

**(f) If we love a person, *we are jealous about his name and honor.*** We do not like to hear him spoken against without speaking up for him and defending him. We feel bound to maintain his interests and his reputation. We regard the person who treats him ill with almost as much disfavor as if he had ill-treated us. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The true Christian regards with a godly jealousy all efforts to disparage<sup>1</sup> his Master's word, or name, or church, or day. He will confess Him before princes, if necessary, and be sensitive of the least dishonor put upon Him. He will not hold his peace and suffer his Master's cause to be put to shame, without testifying against it. And why is all this? Simply because he loves Him.

**(g) If we love a person, *we like to talk to him.*** We tell him all our thoughts and pour out all our heart to him. We find no difficulty in discovering subjects of conversation. However silent and reserved we may be to others, we find it easy to talk to a much-loved friend. However often we may meet, we are never at a loss for matter to talk about. We always have much to say, much to ask about, much to describe, much to communicate. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The true Christian finds no difficulty in speaking to his Savior. Every day he has something to tell Him, and he is not happy unless he tells it. He speaks to Him in prayer every morning and night. He tells Him his wants and desires, his feelings and his fears. He asks counsel of Him in difficulty. He asks comfort of Him in trouble. He cannot help it. He must converse with his Savior continually, or he would faint by the way. And why is this? Simply because he loves Him.

**(h) Finally, if we love a person, *we like to be always with him.*** Thinking, hearing, reading, and occasionally talking are all well in their way. But when we really love people, we want something more. We long to be always in their company. We wish to be continually in their society and to hold communion with them without interruption or farewell. Well, it is just so between the true Christian and Christ! The heart of a true Christian longs for that blessed day when he will see his Master face to face and go out no more. He longs to be done with sinning, repenting, and believing, and to begin that endless life when he shall see

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<sup>1</sup> **disparage** – belittle; dishonor.

as he has been seen and sin no more. He has found it sweet to live by faith, and he feels it will be sweeter still to live by sight. He has found it pleasant to hear of Christ, talk of Christ, and read of Christ. How much more pleasant will it be to see Christ with his own eyes and never to leave him anymore! “Better,” he feels, “is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire” (Ecc 6:9). And why is all this? Simply because he loves Him.

Such are the marks by which true love may be discovered. They are all plain, simple, and easy to understand. There is nothing dark, abstruse,<sup>2</sup> and mysterious about them. Use them honestly and handle them fairly, and you cannot fail to get some light on the subject of this [article].

I speak of things that are familiar to everyone. I need not dwell upon them any further. They are as old as the hills. They are understood all over the world. There is hardly a branch of Adam’s family that does not know something of affection and love. Then let it never be said that we cannot find out whether a Christian really loves Christ. It can be known; it may be discovered; the proofs are all ready to your hand.<sup>3</sup> You have heard them this very day. Love to the Lord Jesus Christ is no hidden, secret, impalpable<sup>4</sup> thing. It is like light—it will be seen. It is like sound—it will be heard. It is like heat—it will be felt. Where it exists, it cannot be hid. Where it cannot be seen you may be sure there is none.

From *Holiness*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY



We are commanded to rejoice in Christ. “Rejoice in the Lord always,” says the apostle, “and again I say, Rejoice” (Phi 4:4). But how is it possible to rejoice in a being for whom we feel no affection? We can easily rejoice in a friend; but by what unheard of process shall we bring ourselves to rejoice in one whom we do not love? Farther, we are commanded to remember Christ, to commemorate at His table His dying love. But how hard it is to retain in our memories an object that has no place in our affections. How little pleasure can we find in coming to the table of one whom we regard with indifference. We may, indeed, bring our bodies; but our hearts will be absent; and the whole service will be uninteresting to ourselves and no better than solemn mockery in the estimation of Christ.—*Edward Payson*

[Christ] shows His love in visiting you under your troubles, in supporting you, in relieving you, and in delivering you. Oh, what love should you have unto the Lord Jesus Christ, Who loves you with such a true love!—*Thomas Vincent*

<sup>2</sup> **abstruse** – difficult to understand.

<sup>3</sup> **ready to your hand** – close to you and available for use.

<sup>4</sup> **impalpable** – not easily comprehended.

# WITHOUT LOVE TO CHRIST

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

*Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me.*

—John 8:42

**L**OVE to Christ is in itself essential. There are some graces in which a man may be deficient, and though he may be the worse for that deficiency, he may still be a Christian. But love to Jesus is an essential grace, a grace of the heart, lying near the vitals of piety,<sup>1</sup> so that the lack of it is fatal. Ye must love Jesus Christ if ye are indeed alive unto God.

Now observe, first, that *the absence of love to Christ is the loss of one of the greatest of spiritual pleasures*. We ought to pity as well as to blame the man who does not love Jesus Christ. Alas, poor soul, into what a state has he fallen that he should not be able to love Him Who is “altogether lovely” (Song 5:16), nor to admire Him Who is the “chiefest among ten thousand” (Song 5:10). I met not long ago with a lady who had lost her taste and smell—a somewhat singular<sup>2</sup> affliction. The fairest rose in the world cannot salute her nostrils with its pleasant perfume. The daintiest flavor that ever delighted men’s palate has no charms for her. She is dead to those pleasures...But what a terrible thing to be unable to perceive the fragrance of the name of Jesus, which is as “ointment poured forth” (Song 1:3); unable to taste the sweet flavor of the bread of heaven or the richness of “wines on the lees well refined” (Isa 25:6), which makes the saints of God so glad. I had rather be blind, deaf, and dumb, and lose my taste and smell than not love Christ. To be unable to appreciate Him is the worst of disabilities, the most serious of calamities. It is not the loss of a single spiritual faculty, but it proves the death of the soul. It evidences the absence of all that can make existence worth the having, for “he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1Jo 5:12), and “the wrath of God abideth on him” (Joh 3:36).

*The absence of the love of Christ in the soul, again, is a sign of very grievous degradation*<sup>3</sup>...Man was made for the highest and most elevated enjoyment—the enjoyment of the presence of God and the admiration of His

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<sup>1</sup> **vitals of piety** – most important things necessary for godliness.

<sup>2</sup> **singular** – unusual.

<sup>3</sup> **degradation** – reduced in intellectual or moral character.

infinite perfections; and when he loses this power to appreciate, admire, and love his God, he sinks from his high calling to a level with the brutes.

If an angel could be lowered into a dog, and yet could worship God and love Christ, he would scarcely have fallen at all, compared with the fatal descent of a man who is plunged into such a stupor of evil that he cannot perceive the loveliness of the Lord Jesus Christ! We greatly pity those poor creatures of our own race who are unable to reason; but what shall we think of those who cannot love, or rather cannot love where love should center? To the [person of low intelligence,] you may read the most charming lines of Milton,<sup>4</sup> but he cannot rise to a sense of [grandeur]; you may afterwards pour into his ear the pleasing sweetnesses of Wordsworth,<sup>5</sup> or the fascinating allegories of Bunyan,<sup>6</sup> but he smiles at you vacantly, and you perceive that his [mentally weak] mind is incapable of comprehension. Sad it is that a human being should come down to this; and yet not to love the Lord Jesus reveals a moral and spiritual imbecility<sup>7</sup> far worse than mere mental incapacity because it is willful and involves a crime of the heart.

Generally, the non-appreciation of goodness is attended with an appetite for evil, and hence the ill is doubled. It was a great degradation for the king of Babylon when he left the diet of the royal table to roam the fields with the cattle and to eat grass like the ox. It was not merely that his madness drove him from man, but it herded him with brutes. It not only took away his relish for bread but gave him a taste for grass (Dan 4:1-37). It was a strange madness which drove a king to graze with beasts, but not stranger than that which makes men feed upon the ashes of this world's sinful pleasures and turn aside from that which is truly bread.

Oh, it is a worse insanity than that which is secluded within the walls of yonder Bedlam,<sup>8</sup> this madness that can discover beauty in the painted face of the Jezebel of sin and is not charmed by the comeliness of Him whose brightness is the light of heaven. Yet, O ye saints of God, remember such were you not long ago! "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (Joh 1:11). "We hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Isa 53:3). Our foolish

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<sup>4</sup> **John Milton** (1608-1674) – English poet.

<sup>5</sup> **William Wordsworth** (1770-1850) – English Poet.

<sup>6</sup> **John Bunyan** (1628-1688) – English preacher and author.

<sup>7</sup> **imbecility** – mental dullness; stupidity.

<sup>8</sup> **Bedlam** – Bedlam was the Hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem in London, England, used as an asylum for mentally deranged persons.



heart was darkened, and we saw not Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness. Blessed be the grace that has given us power to appreciate our Savior. May it increase more and more! Let us pity as well as blame those who now are given over to the fast closing of their eyes that they cannot see my Lord, and the shutting of their ears that they cannot hear the music of His voice, and the deadening of their hearts that they cannot perceive the charms of His love. Alas, for the degradation that is manifested in inability to love Jesus!

*To be without love to Christ is a clear proof that the whole of our manhood is out of order.* It would be impossible for us to be indifferent to the excellencies of Jesus if we were as God created us; and inasmuch as we do not love Him until grace renews us, this proves how altogether diseased human nature has become. The understanding, were it well balanced, would judge that Christ is over all and before all, and give to Him the preeminence<sup>9</sup> in everything; but, being biassed and thrown out of gear, the judgment puts Christ in the lowest place and pays its homage<sup>10</sup> to the world, the flesh, or the devil, rather than to the King of kings. The mind must be altogether [morally corrupted] and robbed of all nobility, not to love One Whose self-denying benevolence commands the admiring gratitude of all renewed spirits. Did our Lord descend from heaven to earth to save His enemies? Being found on earth in fashion as a man, did He endure every insult and every misery with the sole object of blessing others, and did He at last endure pangs never to be described, and all for the sake of worthless man? Then not to love such a mirror of generous affection is to be mean<sup>11</sup> in spirit and base at heart. Gratitude is no very stupendous virtue, but it is needful to deliver us from being guilty of the meanest of all the vices, for ingratitude may justly be so described. Man despising the Christ who died for man is a sight enough to make an angel mourn; yes, seraph<sup>12</sup> might weep with wonder that a creature once so fair as man should have become so foul at heart. God forgive the mind that can be so unjust, so perverted, so bewitched and besotted<sup>13</sup> as to treat Jesus with indifference.

Man's affections as well as his mind must have become terribly polluted, or he would at once love Jesus. If the heart were what it should be, it would love the good, the right, the true, the beautiful. Nothing is

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<sup>9</sup> **preeminence** – first place; to be above all else.

<sup>10</sup> **homage** – special honor or respect shown publicly.

<sup>11</sup> **mean** – contemptible.

<sup>12</sup> **seraph** – angelic beings with six wings, hands and feet, and (presumably) a human voice, seen in Isaiah's vision as hovering above the throne of God (Isaiah 6).

<sup>13</sup> **bewitched and besotted** – fascinated, as if under a spell and intellectually stupefied, as with liquor.

more good, right, true, or beautiful than Jesus Christ the incarnate God; and that the heart does not instinctively love Him as soon as ever it perceives Him is clear proof that it is poisoned at its fountain. It is given unto its idols, and therefore it will not love the true God. If you needed at this time to prove man's fallen state, you might do so by a thousand arguments, but only one would be needed. There, perhaps, was never a more powerful demonstration than that of the first chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans...a chapter that contains the most terrible of indictments against our manhood, and every word of it true. But, sirs, I take it that all the unnatural lusts into which men have fallen, though they be deeds that crimson the cheek of modesty,<sup>14</sup> do not so thoroughly prove human nature to be corrupt as man's not loving Christ.

A certain divine on one occasion, wishing to display his rhetoric,<sup>15</sup> and bring down upon himself the admiration of his hearers, exclaimed, "O virtue, thou art so fair and beautiful that if thou shouldst descend upon earth all men would love thee." How greatly he erred! For virtue *did* descend on earth, clothed in the most attractive form, the form of pure benevolence, and yet men received her not. Virtue came in the person of our Lord Jesus, not dressed in the armor of justice, but in the silken robes of salvation, [adorned] with charity and tenderness. But men refused her a habitation, denied her the common courtesies of life, and at last condemned her to die. When man crucified Jesus, he did, as much as in him lay, destroy all goodness, truth, and holiness. Then did he spit his worst venom upon everything that is lovely and of good repute, for he selected the most lovely and honored of all beings to be murdered by his malice. Not to love Jesus Christ is, whatever your outward character may be, dear friend, to angels and to all intelligent and purified spirits who are fit to judge, the most terrible symptom of your [bondage] to a malignant spiritual disease, which tyrannizes over all your powers and causes you to be the opponent of your best friend.

*Not to love Jesus Christ is a sure token that we have no part nor lot in His salvation, for the first effect of receiving His salvation is to love Him.* You remember our Lord's parable of the two debtors. The one owed five-hundred pence and the other fifty. They were both freely forgiven their debts because they had nothing to pay, and the question asked concerning them was "Which of them will love him most?" (Luk 7:36-50). Now mark, the question was not "Which of them will love their generous benefactor?"<sup>16</sup> for it is taken for granted, and who will deny that

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<sup>14</sup> **crimson the cheek of modesty** – causes the humble to blush.

<sup>15</sup> **divine...rhetoric** – religious leader desiring to show off his persuasive speaking skills.

<sup>16</sup> **benefactor** – one who renders aid or kindly service to others.

whether forgiven fifty pence or five hundred, they must love him who forgave them. It is inevitable that if you have been forgiven your sin, you should love Jesus Christ. And if you do not love Him, rest assured that you have no portion in His precious blood, and His righteousness does not cover you. Solemn reflection! How essential is this excellent grace of love!

*Without love to Christ, it is clear that you are not saved, for you lack the mainspring<sup>17</sup> of the spiritual life.* We are often charged with telling men to believe and live, and that in doing so, we throw a holy life and virtuous [behavior] into the shade. If our objectors were candid, they would inquire whether their accusation is true; and as the result of that inquiry, they would acquit us. Either ignorance, misunderstanding, or malevolence must have occasioned the utterly groundless charge, for we have explained times without number that when we say, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Act 16:31)...we mean that trust in Jesus will change the heart, and so save the life from sin. By salvation, we mean salvation from sin, salvation from the old selfish life, salvation unto holy living. This is the salvation that we preach—salvation from evil—and this we say is the result of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. If these things be so, it is evident that the man who does not love Christ is not saved in this sense, for love to Christ is through the Holy Spirit made to be the mainspring and central force by which a holy life is created and sustained. “The love of Christ constraineth us” (2Co 5:14). This is the grand power that keeps us back from evil and impels us toward holiness. In proportion as you love Jesus, you will be holy; and in proportion as your love to Jesus becomes weak, the power of sin grows strong; and if there be no love to Jesus at all, then none of the elements that make up the Christian character are in you...Not to love Christ is a thing so dreadful that those who do love Him can hardly tell you how they tremble at the bare notion of being in such a condition. Death in the most horrible form would be preferable...

It would be much better never to have been born than not to love the Savior; better to go to annihilation, if such could be the case, than that we should exist a moment without love to the Blessed One. Sometimes the saints of God have grown so warm concerning what is due to Jesus their Lord and have gotten to feel such a horror at the sin of not loving Him that they have pronounced a curse in God’s name upon those who love not Christ. Perhaps the most terrible words in sacred Scripture are these—“If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be

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<sup>17</sup> **mainspring** – chief cause or motivating influence.

Anathema Maranatha” (1Co 16:22)—“cursed when the Lord shall come.” It is the major excommunication of the church; it is the most solemn word of denunciation that could have fallen from apostolic pen, and yet Paul felt that he must write it, even that Paul who could not speak of the enemies of Christ’s cross without tears. My dear hearer, though you be the most moral person in the world, and though you be the most orthodox professor in the church, yet if you love not the Lord Jesus Christ, “Anathema Maranatha” must be sounded in your ears, for it is proclaimed in the word of God against you.

Who would wish to live without the love of Jesus in his soul? It is the most hideous of all conditions, for it despoils our life on earth of its highest beauty and renders heaven impossible. Until He gives you love to Christ, God Himself cannot give you heaven. You may take my words in their broadest sense, for I mean them just as they stand. I say until God Himself makes you love Christ, He cannot give you heavenly happiness, for *the very essence of heaven* lies in the love of that which is good and true, and the essence of all goodness and truth are in Jesus. Could you be carried to the place called heaven without love to Christ, you would be utterly out of your element. The nearer presence of Christ into which you would be brought would cause you terror instead of happiness, and the delight that you would see upon the faces of ten thousand times ten thousand who love Him would only provoke you to a direr enmity<sup>18</sup> and a bitterer despair. O, my friend, you cannot know happiness until you know Christ. Until your heart beats with love to Him, the true life can never be yours, but you are in darkness and death even until now, and so you must abide. It is inevitable that it should be so. So, I leave [this] very weighty point, praying [that] God the Holy Spirit [will] press it upon the hearts of all who have no affection for the Savior: It is essential that you should love Him.

From a sermon delivered on Lord’s Day morning, October 3, 1875,  
at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.



Supreme love to Christ is indispensably necessary because without it, we could not possibly be happy in heaven. You will allow that no man can be happy who is where he does not wish to be. No man can wish to be in a place where he is separated from all that he loves. But the man who does not love Christ, would find nothing in heaven to love; would find himself separated from all that he loves. All the objects which he ever loved, all the pursuits, employments, and society in which he ever found pleasure, he leaves behind him when he leaves this world. He would, therefore, feel like a stranger in heaven.—*Edward Payson*

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<sup>18</sup> **direr enmity** – more dreadful hostility.

# CURSED FOR NOT LOVING CHRIST

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

*If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be  
Anathema Maranatha.—1 Corinthians 16:22*

**I**T is usual for the Apostle to conclude his epistles with a blessing to those that he writes to. But it is not usual for him to join the curse of hypocrites with it. The reason for his doing it here, very probably, was that the occasion of this epistle was what he had heard of the scandals and disorders that were amongst them. He mentions the divisions in doctrine there was amongst them, contentions in going to law one with another, the breaking out of gross uncleanness in the incestuous persons, and their great disorders at the Lord's table. Those things made the Apostle doubt whether there was not a number of them that were hypocrites that had no love to Jesus Christ. He puts this curse here, in so solemn a manner, to awaken such if there were any, and to put them upon serious consideration and examination of themselves, whether they had any love to Christ or no. It is a dreadful, awful sentence that is here spoken by the Apostle: "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha."<sup>1</sup> These terms were probably such [that] they knew the meaning of them. They signify the final and eternal curse of God, not only a temporal calamity or chastisement, but a full and everlasting infliction of God's wrath.

**Doctrine: Not to love Jesus Christ is crime enough to render any man a cursed person.** Let the man be outwardly never so religious and devout, never so exact in rules of justice and honesty. Let him take never so many pains in religion; let [him] bestow never so much to the poor and to pious uses; let him suffer never so much in religion; yet if he does not love Jesus Christ, that is enough to render him accursed, whatever he has done and whatever he has suffered.

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<sup>1</sup> The word *anathema* is a Greek word that is derived from *anatithemi*, which signifies "to set apart," or "devote"; and *anathema* signified that which is devoted to destruction. *Maranatha* is originally a Syrian word, and according to interpreters signifies "the Lord cometh." This is a threatening [of] everlasting condemnation when Christ the Lord comes to judgment. God denounced such a curse against the ungodly by Enoch: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, behold, the lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all...that are ungodly" (Jude 1:14-15).

Many men in their own minds do hardly call this any crime at all. That they have no love to Christ is not a terrifying consideration to them; they are not ashamed of it, nor do they feel guilty upon the account of it. Notwithstanding, God shows such high resentments of it, and there are such dreadful curses denounced against it in His Word...

**We are to show what it is to be accursed.** And it is to be *devoted*<sup>2</sup> by God to His wrath. The word *anathema*, as we have shown, signifies a thing devoted. For man to curse is to invoke the wrath of God on anyone; for God to curse is to devote unto it. Thus, the ground was cursed after the fall, that is, God would everywhere impress the signatures of His wrath upon it, by making this world a world of sorrow and calamity, and at last burning it up with all the wicked of it...

The curse of God sometimes signifies the calamities and miseries that arise from God's wrath in this world when there is a blast upon their affairs and concerns. But it is generally to be understood [as] a devoting to utter destruction, or to that which is equivalent to it. Thus, Jericho was said to be an accursed city, and it was destroyed and appointed to be a desolation forever and never to be built again. This is the curse of the law, everlasting and full and utter destruction. Jesus Christ, Who was made a curse, did not indeed suffer everlasting destruction, but He bore that which was equivalent to it. So that to be accursed is to be by God wholly devoted to destruction in God's eternal wrath.

**The [second] thing is to show that those that do not love Jesus Christ do highly deserve to be thus accursed.** All sin deserves God's wrath, but this in a special manner and high degree. As God of old used to make His curse visible upon those that were guilty of some special, provoking iniquity by ordering them to be hanged on trees, so do those that do not love the Lord Jesus Christ deserve the curse in a like special manner. And this will appear by the following considerations:

There can be nothing that can render any person deserving of our love, nor any possible degree of it, but what is to be found in Jesus Christ. He has in Him all possible excellence. He has infinite majesty, as He is the great God and Creator of the world. He has infinite holiness. He has infinite wisdom and boundless grace and goodness. There is nothing that is an excellence of a mind, but it is in Him to an infinite degree. It is impossible but it should be so because all that is excellent, all that is beautiful and desirable in the whole creation, He is the fountain of it. And if it is not enough that He hath all divine excellence,

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<sup>2</sup> **devoted** – committed to destruction.

which comprehends all possible excellence, He has also in His person all human excellence, such as charity, meekness, patience, and humility joined with great wisdom and holiness. We cannot devise any qualification that is endearing in any man, but it is in His human nature to an immensely greater degree than it ever was in any other man, and greater than in any other creature. The man Christ Jesus is “the firstborn of every creature” (Col 1:15), the brightest and most beautiful part of all the works of creation.

And His lovely qualifications are exceedingly clear, set before and brightly represented to [us]. His excellence is not what we have only just accidentally heard of, but Christ has manifested Himself various ways unto mankind from the very first creation and fall of man. At length, [He] came down and dwelt amongst us and familiarly conversed with men for a long time together. [He] manifested Himself not only in visions and by His prophets, but by appearing Himself personally. And we have an account of His birth, life, conversation, speeches, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension very particularly set forth by four several histories, besides the revelations of Himself by the Holy Ghost to the apostles after He was ascended into heaven. And we in this land of light have the excellence of Christ continually set before us from our very infancy by education, and by the constant preaching of the Word, and have Christ set forth before our eyes by sensible signs in the sacraments. And we also have the glory of Christ set before us in many instances of the success of the gospel, and the holy lives of His people. God has used abundance of methods to set before us the excellence of His Son; the light clearly shines all around us and breaks forth from every quarter. God has exercised His infinite wisdom in contriving to exhibit His Son’s excellence in a glorious light.

And then He stands in such a relation to us, and we have that dependence upon Him that we have all the reason to take notice of His excellence that can be conceived of. He exhibits Himself to us as our Savior, as our Deliverer from all misery, and the Author of all our happiness. And we stand in the greatest necessity of Him. We shall perish forever without Him, neither can we have any other help. We have such a dependence upon Him that He is our all and our only.

As there is no possible excellence but what is in Him, so there [is] no possible kindness that can be in anyone to oblige love than is to [be] found in Him. Neither is it possible that the kindness of anyone should be attended with circumstances that do more enhance the obligation than His love and grace, [which] exceeds in degree all that ever was. He loved men so greatly that His love aimed at nothing less than their

eternal happiness with Him, their nearest union and communion with Him, and their being coheirs with Him of eternal happiness in the Father's love. And He loved them [so], that He was willing to lay out Himself exceedingly for the accomplishing of these things. His love was such as brought Him down from heaven to the earth and made [Him] willing to be incarnate and to appear in a low condition, to undertake great labors and undergo great sufferings, and even to lay down His life. There can be no greater love conceived of, whether you measure the love by the benefit or by the manner of procuring<sup>3</sup> it. There can be no greater benefit than deliverance from eternal misery, and the conferring of eternal happiness. And it is impossible that [there] should be greater expressions of love in the manner of procuring of any benefit. Merely doing a great deal without expense is not so great a manifestation of love as *suffering*. And there is none can show his love by suffering more than by dying. And though there are degrees of suffering even in death, yet no greater degree can be thought of than Christ suffered in His death. The kind of death was most tormenting and most disgraceful. But in His death, besides outward torment, there was torment in His mind, the part that is most capable of misery. Both His bloody sweat and His crying out show the greatest degree of suffering in that.

And as it is impossible that there should be a greater kindness in anyone, so it is impossible that any kindness should be attended with circumstances that do more increase the obligation, whether we consider His greatness and infinite superiority, and His independence any way upon us. It is impossible that any person should be greater or stand in less need of us, or whether we consider our unworthiness as we are rebels, traitors, enemies, etc.

Therefore, if it be possible that one person may have so much reason to love another that it will be the highest degree of baseness not to love him, then it follows that it is the utmost and most provoking degree of baseness in men not to love Jesus Christ. And therefore, if any sin deserves that God should be so provoked as to devote to His wrath, doubtless this sin is such; and persons that are guilty of it, however little troubled their consciences are about [it], yet they deserve to be forever cursed of God.

We shall offer one consideration more:

**Third, the abuse offered to God the Father in not loving Jesus Christ is equal to that offered to the Son.** We may well conclude that this sort of sin, even baseness towards the Redeemer, which God has sent into

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<sup>3</sup> **procuring** – obtaining something with care or effort.



the world, is the most provoking to Him of any whatsoever. The Father took pity upon us after we had sinned against Him and brought ourselves thereby into the greatest misery, though we brought it upon ourselves through our own folly and baseness towards Him. Yet, when He saw what a doleful condition we were in, His bowels yearned towards us. Yes, He pitied us and loved us so that He sent His own Son to suffer in our stead, to bear what justice and the law required in our room. Now to have those persons that He had such pity upon and showed such kindness to be base towards His Son that He sent to save us, to slight Him and disregard His love and kindness, not so much as to love or thank Him for it, is a great abuse offered to the Father. Most doubtless, [it] is very provoking to Him.

It is a provoking thing to God when men are base to any of His messengers that come in His name. Though they be but His servants, He expects they should be treated with the respect that it becomes them to treat them that come in the name of so glorious a Being. But God takes it abundantly more heinously when they are base to His own Son.

The Son is infinitely dear to the Father. Therefore, he is called God's dear Son, and [God] declares from heaven that Christ is His "beloved Son" (Mat 3:17). And Christ says to God, "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (Joh 17:24). Therefore, what baseness is offered to the Son is equally provoking to the Father, both because the love of the Father towards men in sending His Son is as great as of the Son in coming, and because the Son is infinitely dear to the Father; so that when He is abused, it comes as near to the Father as the Son, for the Father and the Son are one.

The thing under the doctrine is that those who never have any love to the Lord Jesus Christ shall actually be forever cursed of God for their baseness. All that now have no love to Christ are now under the curse upon that account, and they that never do in this life will be cursed to all eternity. They are cursed men while they are here in this world, but they shall know what it is to [be] cursed in the world to come. There are many fruits of God's curse that come upon those that do not love Jesus Christ before they die. They are cursed in soul and body and in all their affairs. God oftentimes curses their souls by giving them up to hardness of heart and blindness of mind, by suffering their lusts greatly to prevail by giving of them up to worldly mindedness, to sensuality, to pride and maliciousness, and oftentimes to erroneous principles and caviling<sup>4</sup> spirit at the doctrines of Christianity. Oftentimes, [He gives

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<sup>4</sup> **caviling** – finding fault unnecessarily; raising trivial objections.

them] to some particular vice—to drunkenness, uncleanness, dishonesty, profaneness or some other. And some are given up to many vices. God often curses their souls by giving Satan a great loose against them, by suffering of them to fall into frequent and strong temptations. God gives them to the devil, in a sense, while they are alive. There is a blast<sup>5</sup> upon the Word and ordinances that they enjoy. They do them no good, but rather harden [them]; they are made a savor of death to them. They are like the ground that, let the rain fall upon it or sun shine upon it, it will bring forth nothing but briars and thorns, which is “nigh unto cursing” (Heb 6:8).

Their outward enjoyments are made curses to them; their table is made “a snare, and a trap to them” (Rom 11:9). If they are in prosperity, they are like an ox that is [being fattened] for the slaughter. This is the curse that Jeremiah denounced by God’s Spirit against those that had God “far from their reins,” that is, that did not love Him. “Thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins<sup>6</sup>...Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and prepare them for the day of slaughter” (Jer 12:2-3). If they are in affliction, it is not fatherly correction, but their afflictions are the fruits of God’s vengeance. Their meat and their drink, their money and their land, their good and their evil is all cursed to them...All that they receive will be for their destruction in another world, until they be destroyed; and then, as I said before, they will know what it is to be cursed of God. Oftentimes, men are cursed in this world, and yet are merry and jocund; but then they will feel the weight of it. They will be forever devoted to God’s wrath and fiery vengeance, which shall be poured out upon them without mixture for their not loving Jesus Christ.

From “It’s Crime Enough to Render Any Man a Cursed Man That Loves Not Jesus Christ,” in *Jonathan Edwards Sermons*, ed. Wilson H. Kimnach  
(New Haven, CT: The Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale  
University, 1728-1729), 1Co 16:22.



Whatever motive induced Christ to love you, it was not drawn from yourselves, but it was drawn from His own [heart]. And will not this free love of Christ incline you to love Him? Does He love you most freely, and will you not love Him most dearly? Did Christ love you without any motive to draw His love; and will you not love Christ, in Whom there are so many motives to draw your love? Did Christ love you under your deformity, and will not you love Him in Whom there is such perfect beauty?

—Thomas Vincent

<sup>5</sup> **blast** – curse.

<sup>6</sup> **reins** – center of human feelings or affections, representative of the heart.

# THE TRIAL OF OUR LOVE

Thomas Vincent (1634-1678)

**H**ERE you may know whether you are true Christians: by the trial of your love unto Jesus Christ. Examine yourselves therefore, whether you love Jesus Christ, Whom you have never seen. The most in the world only love truly those persons and things that they have seen; but can you say that you sincerely and chiefly love Jesus Christ, Whom you have not seen? The love of most arises from the notice that the *eye* gives to the objects beloved; but does your love arise from the notice that the *ear* has given by the Word of the amiableness that there is in Christ?

How may we know whether we have true love to Jesus Christ? You may know the truth of your love to Jesus Christ by your desires after Christ's presence, by your prizing and frequenting those ways wherein Christ is to be found and seeking Him therein, by your love of Christ's image, [and] by your obedience to Christ's commandments.

**FIRST, BY YOUR DESIRES AFTER CHRIST'S PRESENCE.** Wherever there is a great love for any person, there is a desire after the presence of that person. Do you sincerely and earnestly desire Christ's presence? There is a twofold presence of Christ: 1) His gracious presence here, and 2) His glorious presence at the Last Day.

**1) Christ's gracious presence here:** There is Christ's gracious presence here: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (Joh 14:18). You desire that such friends and relations would come unto you, but do you desire chiefly that Christ would come unto you? Christ comes to His disciples a) in a way of gracious communication,<sup>1</sup> b) in a way of gracious manifestation,<sup>2</sup> and c) in a way of sweet consolation that results from both.

**a) *Gracious communication:*** Do you desire that Christ would come unto you in a way of gracious communication? Are your desires after communication of spiritual *light* from Christ to teach and guide you, of spiritual *life* from Christ to quicken and encourage you, of spiritual *strength* from Christ to support you under burdens and enable you unto duties? Do you earnestly desire communications of all kinds, and further degrees of grace, out of that fullness of grace that is in Christ? Do

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<sup>1</sup> **communication** – imparting or giving spiritual gifts and graces.

<sup>2</sup> **manifestation** – making known or revealing by God's Spirit.

you hunger and thirst after Christ's righteousness, not only that it may be imputed to you for your justification,<sup>3</sup> but also that it may be more and more imparted unto you for your further sanctification<sup>4</sup>—that you might be brought and hereby wrought into a more perfect conformity and likeness unto Jesus Christ? This is evidence of true love.

**b) *Gracious manifestation:*** Do you desire that Christ would come unto you in a way of gracious manifestation? “He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (Joh 14:21). Do you earnestly desire the fulfilling of this promise: that Christ would discover to you more of the loveliness of His person and of the love of His heart? Are you grieved when your Beloved withdraws Himself, when the curtain is drawn and a cloud interposes between you and this Sun of righteousness (Mal 4:2), when He hides and veils His face from you? And do you long after Christ's returns and the discoveries of Himself unto you? “Come Lord Jesus, Come quickly. Be as a roe or young hart upon the mountains of spices (Song 8:14). Leap over the mountains, and skip over the hills (Song 2:8), and make haste unto my soul, which is sick of love for Thee in Thy absence from me (Song 5:8). Oh, that I might see Thy face which is so fair! That I might hear Thy voice, which is so sweet (Song 2:14)! That I might feel Thy presence, which is so refreshing! Oh, that I might behold Thy heart-ravishing smiles! Say, Lord, that I am Thine, and Thou art mine; that Thou hast loved me and given Thyself for me; that Thy love to me was from everlasting and that it is unchangeable.” Are these, or such like, the breathings of your souls? Such are the breathings of love to Christ.

**c) *Sweet consolation:*** Do you desire that Christ would come unto you in a way of sweet consolation, which results from this communication and manifestation? Are you desirous after the oil of gladness (Heb 1:9), which Christ is anointed with—that He would give you of the unction of the Spirit, not only to sanctify you, but also to comfort you? Do you desire that your heart might be filled with spiritual joys—the joys of the Holy Ghost, which are unspeakable and full of glory (1Pe 1:8)? Do you desire the comforts that Christ gives, beyond all the comforts that

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<sup>3</sup> **justification** – Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardons all our sins (Rom 3:24; Eph 1:7), and accepts us as righteous in His sight (2Co 5:21) only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us (Rom 5:19), and received by faith alone (Gal 2:16; Phi 3:9). (*Spurgeon's Catechism*, Q. 32) See Free Grace Broadcaster 187, *Justification*; both available from CHAPEL LIBRARY

<sup>4</sup> **sanctification** – Sanctification is the work of God's Spirit whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God and are enabled more and more to die to sin and live to righteousness. (*Spurgeon's Catechism*, Q. 34) See Free Grace Broadcaster 215, *Sanctification*; available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

the world and the flesh can give?<sup>2</sup>—the comforts that come in at the door of faith, beyond all the comforts that come in at the door of sense; those joys that are in Christ, beyond all joys that can be found in the most sweet and desirable creature-enjoyment? This evidences true love to Christ; thus do you desire Christ's gracious presence.

**2) Christ's glorious presence at the Last Day:** Do you also desire Christ's glorious presence at the Last Day? When He promises, "Surely I come quickly," can your hearts make answer as, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20)? Are you glad you live so near the end of the world that the Lord is at hand, that the coming of the Lord draws nearer and nearer every day? Can you lift up your heads with joy when you look towards the place where the Lord Jesus Christ is, at "the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Heb 8:1), and think with comfort that "yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry" much longer (Heb 10:37); that within a while, Christ will "descend from heaven with a shout" (1Th 4:16), with "the sound of a trumpet" (Heb 12:19); and that your eyes shall see Him in the brightness of His glory and majesty? Do you look and long for the day of Christ's glorious appearance from heaven, when you shall be awakened out of your graves (where you may take a short sleep before) and be gathered together by the angels, and be caught up in the clouds, and there (in shining garments of immortality on your bodies and of Christ's unspotted righteousness in your souls) be brought with shouting and acclamation of joy and triumph into His presence, Who will then acquit you graciously from all sin and punishment, own you openly for His faithful servants, crown you gloriously before the whole world, and receive you to live and reign with Him to all eternity?

Have you such desires as these? If some of you say you are afraid of Christ's glorious appearance, lest then you should be rejected because you fear you are not ready and prepared; yet, can you say also from your hearts that you desire above all things that you may be ready, that you endeavor to make ready, that it is your grief you are not more ready; and that if you were ready and were assured of your interest in Christ, you could desire that Christ would come immediately; and that you desire no greater happiness and felicity<sup>5</sup> than to live with Christ in glory; and that you account the presence of Christ *in* heaven to be the happiness *of* heaven? These are evidence of true desires after Christ's glorious presence and of sincere love to Christ.

**SECONDLY, YOU MAY KNOW YOUR LOVE TO CHRIST BY YOUR PRIZING**

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<sup>5</sup> felicity – prosperity.

**AND FREQUENTING THOSE WAYS WHEREIN CHRIST IS TO BE FOUND AND SEEKING HIM THEREIN.** Such are the ways of His ordinances<sup>6</sup> both public and private. Christ's way is in His sanctuary; and in His ordinances He may be found. Do you give your attendance unto ordinances: public prayer, the preaching of the Word, the Lord's Supper? And do you prize these ordinances because of the stamp of Christ's institution upon them, because of Christ's presence in them, and because they are a means of bringing you and Christ together?

And when you are under ordinances, do you diligently seek after Christ in ordinances? Do you rest in the outside and carnal<sup>7</sup> part of ordinances in meeting with God's people there; or do you design, desire, and endeavor after something more inward, spiritual, and incomparably sweet, that you [may] meet with Christ there, that you may have fellowship with the Father and the Son therein? And upon this account, can you say as David, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!" and, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand" (Psa 84:1, 10), and, "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple" (Psa 27:4)?

Do you also seek after Christ in your families and in your closets? Do you seek Him in secret prayer and meditation? Your love to Christ expresses itself in your desires. Your desires show themselves in your seeking after Christ in His ways.

**THIRDLY, YOU MAY KNOW YOUR LOVE TO CHRIST BY YOUR LOVE OF CHRIST'S IMAGE:**<sup>8</sup> a) There is the image of Christ on His Word, and b) there is the image of Christ on His people.

**a. Do you love the image of Christ on His Word?** As Caesar's coin did bear Caesar's image and superscription, so the Word of the Scriptures, which is the Word of Christ, bears Christ's image and superscription. Do you love the Scriptures because of Christ's image that is upon them? Do you love the word of doctrine in the Scripture because of the image of Christ's truth and wisdom upon it? Do you love the word of precepts in the Scriptures because of the image of Christ's holiness upon it? Do you love the word of threatenings in the Scriptures because of the image of Christ's righteousness upon it? Do you love the

<sup>6</sup> **ordinances** – means by which God blesses us, such as the Word, prayer, fellowship, preaching, etc. (1Pe 2:2).

<sup>7</sup> **carnal** – material; not spiritual.

<sup>8</sup> **EDITOR'S NOTE:** "Image" does not mean "picture," "icon," or "statue." It asks if the reader treasures the character, attributes, power, and fruits of Christ in Scripture and in His people.

word of promises in the Scriptures because of the image of Christ's goodness, grace, and love upon it? You have Christ's Word in your Bibles, and sometimes sounding in your ears, but does the Word of Christ dwell in your hearts? You receive Christ's Word in the light of it; do you receive His Word in the love of it?

**b. Do you love Christ's image on His people?** If you love not your brother, whom you have seen, how can you love your Lord, Whom you have not seen (1Jo 4:20)? All Christ's disciples do bear Christ's image. If you love the Original you will love the picture, although it be but imperfectly drawn. If you love the perfect goodness and holiness that is in Christ, you will love the goodness and holiness that you see in the saints, although they have it but in an imperfect measure. Do you love Christ's disciples, and that because of Christ's image, although they differ from you in some opinions that are circumstantial?

**FOURTHLY, YOU MAY KNOW YOUR LOVE TO CHRIST BY YOUR OBEDIENCE UNTO HIS COMMANDMENTS:** "If you love me, keep my commandments...He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (Joh 14:15, 21). You have Christ's commandments; do you keep them? You know them; do you practice them? Your love to Christ is known by your obedience unto Christ. If Christ be your Beloved, He is also your Lord. If you have true affection for Him, you yield subjection unto Him. If you love Christ, you are careful to please Christ. You are not the servants of the flesh to take care to please the flesh; but you are the servants of Christ to take care above all persons and all things to please Christ. If you love Christ, you are fearful of giving just occasion of offence unto men, but above all you are fearful of displeasing and offending your Lord. Do you labor so to walk that you may please Christ in the way of sincere and universal obedience?<sup>9</sup> Are you hearty in your obedience unto Christ? Have you a respect to all His commandments? Is it your grief that you fall short in your obedience unto Christ? If you can say in the presence of the Lord—and your hearts do not give your tongues the lie—that you don't live and allow yourselves in the practice of any known sin, which Christ forbids, nor in the neglect of any known duty that Christ commands, this is a sure evidence of true love to Jesus Christ. Thus for the trial of your love unto Christ.

*From The True Christian's Love for the Unseen Christ,*  
available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.



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<sup>9</sup> **universal obedience** – obedience in all things.

# DO YOU LOVE JESUS CHRIST?

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)

*Lovest thou me?—John 21:16*

I cannot end [this article] without an effort to press its subject home to the individual conscience of each into whose hands it has fallen. I do it with all love and affection. My heart's desire and prayer to God in writing this...is to do good to souls.

**1. Let me ask you, for one thing, to look the question in the face, which Christ asked of Peter, and *try to answer it for yourself*.** Look at it seriously. Examine it carefully. Weigh it well. After reading all that I have said about it, can you honestly say that you love Christ?

It is no answer to tell me that you believe the truth of Christianity and hold the articles of the Christian faith. Such religion as this will never save your soul. The devils believe in a certain way and tremble (Jam 2:19). True saving Christianity is not the *mere* believing a certain set of opinions and holding a certain set of notions. Its essence is knowing, trusting, and loving a certain living Person Who died for us—even Christ the Lord. The early Christians, like Phoebe, and Persis, and Tryphena, and Tryphosa, and Gaius, and Philemon, knew little, probably, of dogmatic theology.<sup>1</sup> But they all had this grand leading feature in their religion: they loved Christ.

It is no answer to tell me that you disapprove of a religion of feelings. If you mean by that that you dislike a religion consisting of *nothing but feelings*, I agree with you entirely. But if you mean to shut out feelings altogether, you can know little of Christianity. The Bible teaches us plainly that a man may have good feelings without any true religion. But it teaches us no less plainly that there can be no true religion without some feeling towards Christ.

It is vain to conceal that if you do not love Christ your soul is in great danger. You can have no saving faith now while you live. You are unfit for heaven if you die. He that lives without love to Christ can be sensible of no obligation to Him. He that dies without love to Christ could never be happy in that heaven where Christ is all and in all. Awake to

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<sup>1</sup> **dogmatic theology** – Systematic theology, or dogmatic theology as it is also called, is the systematic statement of doctrinal propositions formulated from the data afforded by God Himself in His own inspired Word. (Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, 2002)



know the peril of your position! Open your eyes. Consider your ways and be wise. I can only warn you as a friend. But I do it with all my heart and soul. May God grant that this warning may not be in vain!

**2. In the next place, if you do not love Christ, let me tell you plainly *what the reason is*.** You have no sense of debt to Him. You have no feeling of obligation to Him. You have no abiding recollection of having gotten anything from Him. This being the case, it is not likely, it is not probable, it is not reasonable that you should love Him.

There is but one remedy for this state of things. That remedy is self-knowledge and the teaching of the Holy Ghost. The eyes of your understanding must be opened. You must find out what you are by nature. You must discover that grand secret—your guilt and emptiness in God’s sight.

Perhaps you never read your Bible at all, or only read an occasional chapter as a mere matter of form without interest, understanding, or self-application. Take my advice today and change your plan. Begin to read the Bible...in earnest and never rest until you become familiar with it. Read what the law of God requires, as expounded by the Lord Jesus in the fifth of St. Matthew. Read how St. Paul describes human nature in the first two chapters of his Epistle to the Romans. Study such passages as these with prayer for the Spirit’s teaching, and then say whether you are not a debtor to God and a debtor in mighty need of a friend like Christ.

Perhaps you are one who has never known anything of real, hearty, business-like prayer. You have been used to regard religion as an affair of churches, chapels, forms, services, and Sundays, *but not as a thing requiring the serious heartfelt attention of the inward man*. Take my advice today and change your plan. Begin the habit of real earnest pleading with God about your soul. Ask Him for light, teaching, and self-knowledge. Beseech Him to show you anything you need to know for the saving of your soul. Do this with all your heart and mind, and I have no doubt before long [that] you will feel your need of Christ.

The advice I offer may seem simple and old-fashioned. Do not despise it on that account. It is the good old way in which millions have walked already and found peace in their souls. Not to love Christ is to be in imminent<sup>2</sup> danger of eternal ruin. To see your need of Christ and your amazing debt to Christ is the first step towards loving Him. To know yourself and find out your real condition before God is the only

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<sup>2</sup> **imminent** – about to happen; approaching.

way to see your need. To search God's Book and ask God for light in prayer is the right course by which to attain saving knowledge. Do not be above taking the advice I offer. Take it and be saved.

**3. In the last place, if you really know anything of love towards Christ, accept two parting words of *comfort* and *counsel*.** The Lord grant [that] they may do you good.

For one thing, if you love Christ in deed and truth, rejoice in the thought that you have good evidence about the state of your soul. Love—I tell you this day—love is an evidence of grace.

What though you are sometimes perplexed with doubts and fears? What though you find it hard to say whether your faith is genuine and your grace real? What though your eyes are often so dimmed with tears that you cannot clearly see your calling and election of God? Still there is ground for hope and strong consolation, if your heart can testify that you love Christ. Where there is true love, there is faith and grace. You would not love Him if He had not done something for you. Your very love is a token for good.

For another thing, if you love Christ, never be ashamed to let others see it and know it. Speak for Him. Witness for Him. Live for Him. Work for Him. If He has loved you and washed you from your sins in His own blood, you never need shrink from letting others know that you feel it and love Him in return.

"Man," said a thoughtless, ungodly English traveler, to a North American Indian convert, "Man, what is the reason that you make so much of Christ and talk so much about Him? What has this Christ done for you that you should make so much ado about Him?" The converted Indian did not answer him in words. He gathered together some dry leaves and moss and made a ring with them on the ground. He picked up a live worm and put it in the middle of the ring. He struck a light and set the moss and leaves on fire. The flame soon rose, and the heat scorched the worm. It writhed in agony, and after trying in vain to escape on every side, curled itself up in the middle, as if about to die in despair. At that moment, the Indian reached forth his hand, took up the worm gently and placed it on his bosom. "Stranger," he said to the Englishman, "Do you see that worm? I was that perishing creature. I was dying in my sins, hopeless, helpless, and on the brink of eternal fire. It was Jesus Christ who put forth the arm of His power. It was Jesus Christ Who delivered me with the hand of His grace and plucked me from everlasting burnings. It was Jesus Christ who placed me, a poor sinful worm, near the heart of His love. Stranger, that is the reason

I talk of Jesus Christ and make much of Him. I am not ashamed of it because I love Him.”

If we know anything of love to Christ, may we have the mind of this North American Indian! May we never think that we can love Christ too well, live to Him too thoroughly, confess Him too boldly, lay ourselves out for Him too heartily! Of all the things that will surprise us in the resurrection morning, this I believe will surprise us most, that we did not love Christ *more* before we died.

From *Holiness*, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.



The love of the Lord Jesus Christ unto you is the surest love: if He begins to love you, He will continue to love you. If He loves you once, He will love you to the end, or, rather, without end. The love of Christ is not subject to mutations and changes like unto ours. If you lag in your love, He will not fail in His love; and though you offend Him, He is not irreconcilable. He may indeed, upon unkindness on your side, withdraw the manifestations of His love for a while, but He will never wholly remove His love from you. The love of Christ admits of no changing, knows no ending. Christians, what motives can you find in any person or anything in the world that you have seen comparable to those that you have in this Lord Jesus Christ, though you have never seen Him? He is a person most amiable in Himself. His greatness, His holiness, His wisdom, His faithfulness, His fullness, [and] His kindness do make Him shine with an admirable luster. His relation to the Father, and the love that the Father bears to Him; His relation unto you—being your Shepherd, your Captain, your Teacher, your Advocate, your Sovereign, your Benefactor, your Brother, your Husband, your Redeemer—all these do commend Him to your love. But when matchless beauty and loveliness do meet in a person that bears matchless love to you; when this most amiable Lord Jesus loves you with such a free love, such a cordial love, such a strong and active love, such a sure and constant love; when His love is incomparable, surpassing all other love, and incomprehensibly surpassing all knowledge—oh, with what activity, ardor, and constancy should you love so suitable an object!—*Thomas Vincent*

The only question to be answered is, “Lovest thou me?” And if anyone wishes to know whether he is prepared for heaven, the question is still the same. Will you say it is impossible for anyone to answer this question decisively? It appears from our text that this is a mistake. Peter could say to his heart-searching Lord, when His penetrating eye was fixed full upon him, “Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.” If Peter could thus certainly know and confidently assert that he loved Immanuel, all who sincerely love Him may say the same, unless their love is so faint that they cannot perceive it. O how happy is the man who can truly say this! With what delight must he approach Christ’s table! With what confidence can he meet death!

With what triumphant joy may he join with the apostle in exclaiming,

“I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is  
able to keep that which I have committed unto  
him against that day” (2Ti 1:12)!

—*Edward Payson*