

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

“HEREIN IS LOVE.”

A Sermon

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“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”—1 John iv. 10, 11.

THE law commands love; indeed, all its precepts are summed up in that one word “love.” More widely read it runs thus: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself”: yet all this amounts only to “Thou shalt love.”

But the law by reason of our depravity never produced love. We were commanded to love, but we did no such thing. The spirit that is in us is selfish, and it lusteth to envy and to enmity. Whence come wars and fightings among us? Come they not from our lusts? Since the Fall man has become man's bitterest foe upon the earth, and the world is full of hating, slandering, struggling, fighting, wounding, and slaying: all that law can do is to show the wrong of enmity, and threaten punishment; but it cannot supply an unregenerate heart with a fountain of love. Man remains unloving and unlovable till the gospel takes him in hand, and by grace accomplishes that which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh. Love is winning many hearts to the kingdom of God, and its reign shall extend till love shall rule over the whole earth, and so the kingdom of God shall be set up among men, and God shall dwell among them. At the present moment love is the distinguishing mark of the people of God. Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”; and John said, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” The man whose spirit is selfish has not the spirit of Christ, and “if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his.” The man whose spirit is that of envy and contention is evidently no follower of the lowly and loving Jesus, and those who do not follow Jesus are none of his. They that are Christ's are filled with his love. “Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.” God is the centre of the believer's love; the saints are an inner circle specially beloved, and all mankind are embraced

within the circumference of the ring of love. "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him"; and he alone is a child of God whose spirit is kindly and affectionate, and who seeks, wherever he is, to promote peace, goodwill towards men.

The saints begin with love to God. That must ever hold the highest place; for God is the best and noblest being, and we owe him all our hearts. Then comes, for Jesus' sake, love to all who are in Christ. There is a peculiarly near and dear relationship existing between one child of God and all the rest. Loving him that begat, we love all them that are begotten of him. Should not a child love his brothers with a tender, peculiar affection? This principle of love, once implanted, induces in the heart of the converted man a love towards all mankind. Not that he can take any complacency in the wicked; God himself cannot do that; his holiness abhors all iniquity. The love desired is not the love of complacency, but the love of benevolence; so that we wish well, and to the utmost of our power would do well, unto all those that dwell upon the face of the earth. In this holy clarity, this unselfish love, be ye imitators of God as dear children. Our heavenly Father is kind to the unthankful and to the evil, and so must we be; desiring that even the most abandoned may yet be rescued and made right and good. Love desires to create that which is lovable even in the most unlovable of mankind, and God helping the effort, she succeeds.

I hear one say, "This is a vast idea. Are we to love at this rate? Where is the love to come from? Our hearts are narrow, men are unworthy, provocations are numerous, another spirit is abroad in the world: where is this love to come from?—this flood of love which is to cover the tops of the mountains of man's unworthiness?" Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in search of the depths? Yes, by the leadings of God's Spirit we will search out the springs of the sea of love. Only in one place shall we find love enough for our supreme purpose, which is also the purpose of the Lord himself. There is one shoreless ocean into which we may be baptized, and out of which we may be filled until we overflow. Where is the unfailing motive of love? For love is tried, and hardly put to it to hold her own. Can we find a motive that will never fail even towards the most provoking of mankind? Can we find an argument for affection which shall help us in times of ingratitude, when base returns threaten to freeze the very heart of charity? Yes, there is such a motive; there is a force by which even impossibilities of love can be accomplished, and we shall be supplied with a perpetual constraint moving the heart to ceaseless charity.

Come with me, then, in the first place, to notice *the infinite spring of love*—"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us;" secondly, let us observe *the marvellous outflow of that love*—"God sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins;" and then, thirdly, let us notice *the overflow of that love in us*, when it fills our hearts and runs over to others—"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

I. First, THE INFINITE SPRING OF LOVE. Our text has two words upon which I would place an emphasis—"not" and "but."

The first is "not." "Herein is love, not"—"not that we loved God."

Very naturally many conclude that this means "not that we loved God first." That is not exactly the truth taught here, but still it is a weighty truth, and is mentioned in this same chapter in express words—"We love him because he first loved us" (verse nineteen). The cause of love in the universe is not that man loved God first. No being in existence could love God before God loved him; for the existence of such a being is due to God's previous love. His plans of love were all laid and many of them carried out before we were born; and when we were born we none of us loved God first so as to seek after God before he sought after us, so as to desire reconciliation with God before he desired reconciliation with us. No; whatever may be said about freewill as a theory, it is never found as a matter of fact that any man, left to himself, ever woos his God, or pines after friendship with his Maker. If he repents of sin it is because the Spirit of God has first visited him and shown him his sin; if he desires restoration it is because he has first of all been taught to dread the wrath of God and to long for holiness.

"No sinner can be beforehand with thee;
Thy grace is most sovereign, most rich, and most free."

We inscribe a negative in black capital letters upon the idea that man's love can ever be prior to the love of God. That is quite out of the question.

"Not that we loved God." Take a second sense—that is, not that any man did love God at all by nature, whether first or second; not that we, any one of us, ever did or ever could have an affection towards God while we remained in our state by nature. Instead of loving God, man is indifferent to God. "No God," saith the fool in his heart, and by nature we are all such fools. It is the sinner's wish that there were no God. We are atheistical by nature, and if our brain does not yield to atheism, yet our heart does. We wish that we could sin according to our own will, and that we were in no danger of being called to account for it. God is not in all our thoughts, or if he does enter there it is as a terror and a dread. Nay, worse than that: man is at enmity with God by wicked works. The holiness which God admires man hath no liking for; the sin which God abominates has about it sweetness and fascination for the unrenewed heart; so that man's ways are contrary to the ways of God. Man is perverse; he cannot walk with God, for they are not agreed; he is all evil, and God is all goodness, and therefore no love to God exists in the natural heart of man. He may say that he loves God, but then it is a god of his own inventing, and not Jehovah, the God of the Bible, the only living and true God. A just God and a Saviour the natural mind cannot endure: the carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not reconciled to God, neither indeed can be. The unregenerate heart is, as to love, a broken cistern which can hold no water. In our natural state, there is none that doeth good, no, not one; so is there also none that loveth God, no, not one.

We come nearer to John's meaning when we look at this negative as applying to those who do love God. "Not that we loved God,"—that is, that our love to God, even when it does exist, and even when it

influences our lives, is not worthy to be mentioned as a fountain of supply for love. The apostle points us away from it to something far more vast, and then he cries, "Herein is love." I am looking for "the springs of the sea," and you point me to a little pool amid the rocks which has been filled by the flowing tide. I am glad to see that pool; how bright! how blue! how like the sea from whence it came! But do not point to this as the source of the great waterfloods; for if you do I shall smile at your childish ignorance, and point you to yon great rolling main which tosses its waves on high. What is your little pool to the vast Atlantic? Do you point me to the love in the believer's heart, and say, "Herein is love!" You make me smile. I know that there is love in that true heart; but who can mention it in the presence of the great rolling ocean of the love of God, without bottom and without shore? The word *not* is not only upon my lip but in my heart as I think of the two things, "NOT that we loved God, but that God loved us." What poor love ours is at its very best when compared with the love wherewith God loves us!

Let me use another figure. If we had to enlighten the world, a child might point us to a bright mirror reflecting the sun, and he might cry, "Herein is light!" You and I would say, "Poor child, that is but borrowed brightness; the light is not there, but yonder, in the sun: the love of saints is nothing more than the reflection of the love of God. We *have* love, but God *is* love. When I think of the love of certain saints to Christ, I am charmed with it; for it is a fruit of the Spirit not to be despised. When I think of Paul the Apostle counting all things but loss for Christ; when I think of our missionaries going one after another into malarious parts of the African coast, and dying for Christ; and when I read the Book of Martyrs, and see confessors standing on the faggots, burning quick to the death, still bearing witness to their Lord and Master,—I do rejoice in the love of saints to their Lord. Yet this is but a streamlet; the unfathomable deep, the eternal source from which all love proceeds, infinitely exceeds all human affection, and it is found in God, and in God alone. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us."

Let us contrast our love to God with his love to us. Dear brethren, we do love God, and we may well do so, since he is infinitely lovable. When the mind is once enlightened it sees everything that is lovable about God. He is so good, so gracious, so perfect that he commands our admiring affection. The spouse in the Song, when she thought of her beloved, mentioned all manner of beauties, and then cried, "Yea, he is altogether lovely." It is natural, therefore, that one who sees God should love him. But, now, think of God's love to us: is it not incomparably greater, since there was nothing lovely in us whatever, and yet he loved us? In us there is by nature nothing to attract the affection of a holy God, but quite the reverse; and yet he loved us. Herein, indeed, is love!

When we love God it is an honour to us; it exalts a man to be allowed to love a Being so glorious. A philosopher once wrote that for a man to speak of being the friend of God was too daring, and in the reverence of this thoughtful heathen there was much to admire; for indeed there is an infinite difference between the glorious God and the

sinful creature man. Though God in condescension allows us to call him friend, and Jesus says, "Ye are my friends!" yet this is beyond reason, and is a sweet revelation of the Holy Spirit. What an uplifting there is in it for us! On the other hand, God's love to us can add nothing to him; it gives, but receives not. Divine love can have no recompense. That he, the Infinite, should stoop to love the finite; that he the infinitely pure should love the guilty, this is a vast condescension. See, moreover, what it involved; for this love rendered it necessary that in the person of his dear Son God should be "despised and rejected of men," should make himself of no reputation, and should even be numbered with the transgressors. "Herein is love!"

When we love God we are gainers by the deed. He that loves God does in the most effectual manner love himself. We are filled with riches when we abound in love to God; it is our wealth, our health, our might, and our delight. But God gains nothing by loving us. I hardly like to set the two in contrast, for our love is so poor and pitiable a thing as compared with the immeasurable love of God.

It is our duty to love God; we are bound to do it. As his creatures we ought to love our Creator; as preserved by his care we are under obligation to love him for his goodness: we owe him so much that our utmost love is a mere acknowledgment of our debt. But God loved us to whom he owed nothing at all; for whatever might have been the claims of a creature upon his Creator, we had forfeited them all by our rebellion. Sinful men had no rights towards God except the right of being punished. Yet the Lord manifested boundless love to our race, which was only worthy to be destroyed. Oh words! How ye fail me! I cannot utter my heart by these poor lips of clay. Oh God, how infinite was thy love which was given without any obligation on thy part, freely and unsought, and all because thou willest to love—yea, thou dost love because thou art love. There was no cause, no constraint, no claim why thou shouldest love mankind, except that thine own heart led thee so to do. What is man that thou art mindful of him? "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us."

I have thus pointed out the well-head of love: let us draw from it, and from none other. If you go into the world and say, "I am to love my fellow-men because I love God," the motive is good, but it is questionable, limited, and variable. How much better to argue—I am to love my fellow-men because God loves me. When my love grows cold towards God, and when by reason of my infirmity and imperfection I am led even to question whether I do love God at all, then my argument and my impulse would fail me if it came from my own love to God; but if I love the fallen because God loved me, then I have an unchanging motive, an unquestionable argument, and a forcible impulse not to be resisted: hence the apostle cried, "The love of Christ constraineth us." It is always well for a Christian to have the strongest motive, and to rely upon the most potent and perpetual force, and hence the apostle bids us look to divine love, and not to our own. "Herein is love," saith he, "not that we loved God, but that God loved us." So far the "not."

Let us turn to the "but." "*But that he loved us.*" I have nothing new to say, nor do I wish to say anything new; but I should like you

to meditate on each one of these words:—" *He loved us.*" Three words, but what weight of meaning! "*He,*" who is infinitely holy and cannot endure iniquity,—"*He loved us*"; "*He,*" whose glory is the astonishment of the greatest of intelligent beings,—"*He loved us.*" "*He,*" whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, "*loved us.*" "*He*" who is God all-sufficient, and needs nothing of us, neither can indeed receive anything at our hands,—"*He loved us.*" What joy lies sleeping here! Oh, that we could wake it up! What hope, too, for hopeless sinners, because "*God loved us.*" If a man could know that he was loved of all his fellow-men, if he could have it for certain that he was loved by all the angels, doted on by cherubim and seraphim, yet these were but so many drops, and all put together could not compare with the main ocean contained in the fact that "*God loved us.*"

Now ring that second silver bell: "*He loved us.*" I do not think the apostle is here so much speaking of God's special love to his own elect as of his love to men in general. He saw our race ruined in the fall, and he could not bear that man should be destroyed. Lord, what is man that thou dost visit him in love? Yet he did so visit him. The Lord's love made him lament man's revolt, and cry, "*I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me*"; whereupon he bade heaven and earth witness to his grief. He saw that sin had brought men into wretchedness and misery, and would destroy them for ever; and he would not have it so. He loved them with the love of pity, with the love of sweet and strong benevolence, and he declared it with an oath: "*As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but that he turn unto me and live.*" "*Herein is love.*" But if you and I be reconciled to God we can lay the emphasis, each one for himself, upon this word *love*, and view it as special, effectual, electing love. Let each believer say, "*He loved me, and gave himself for me.*" Then what force is in my text: "*He loved us*"; it is not enough that he pitied us, or spared us, or helped us; but "*he loved us.*" It has often made me rise from my seat to think that God loves me! I could not sit still and hear the thrilling truth. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high, I cannot attain unto it. It is sweet to be loved even by a dog; it is sweet to be loved by a babe; it is sweet to be loved by a friend; it is sweet to be loved by God's people; but, oh! to be loved of God, and to know it!—this is paradise. Would a man want any other heaven than to know for certain that he enjoyed the love of God?

Note the third word. "*He loved us,*"—"us,"—the most insignificant of beings. There is an anthill somewhere; it is no matter to you where it is. It teems with ants. Stir the nest, and they swarm in armies. Think of one of them. No; you do not need to know anything about him! His business is no concern of yours; so let him go. But that ant, after all, is more considerable to you than you are to God. "*All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing.*" What are you even in this great city!—one man, one woman in London, in England, in the population of the world,—what a cipher you are! Yet what is the population of this world compared with the universe? I suppose that all these stars which we see at night, all the countless worlds within our range of vision, are but as a little dust in a lone corner

of God's great house. The whole solar system, and all the systems of worlds we have ever thought of, are but as a drop of a bucket compared with the boundless sea of creation ; and even that is as nothing compared to the infinite God : and yet "He loved *us*"—the insignificant creatures of an hour. What is more, he loved us though in our insignificance we dared to rebel against him. We boasted against him ; we cried, "Who is Jehovah ?" We lifted up our hand to fight with him. Ridiculous rebellion ! Absurd warfare ! Had he but glanced at us and annihilated us, it would have been as much as we could merit at his hands ; but to think that he should love us,—*love us*, mark you, when we were in rebellion against him. This is marvellous.

Observe that the previous verse speaks of us as being dead in sin. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." Then we were dead, dead to all goodness, or thought or power, of goodness, criminals shut up in the condemned cell ; and yet God loved us with a great love even when we were dead in trespasses and sins. Child of God, God's love to you to-day is wonderful ; but think of his love to you when you were far gone in rebellion against him. When not a throb of holy, spiritual life could be found in your entire being ; yet he loved you and sent his Son that you might live through him. Moreover, he loved us when we were steeped in sin. Does not our text tell us so ? for he sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins, and this implies that we needed to be reconciled. Our righteous Judge was angry with us ; his righteous wrath smoked against our evil, and yet even then "He loved us." He was wroth with us as a Judge, but yet he loved us : he was determined to punish, and yet resolved to save.

This is a world of wonders ! I am utterly beaten by my text. I confess myself mastered by my theme. But who among us can measure the unfathomable ? "Herein is love," that God freely, out of the spontaneous motion of his own heart, should love us. This is the argument for love ; this is the inexhaustible fountain out of which all love must come. If we desire love, may we come and fill our vessels here and bear it out to others. Love springing from our own bosoms is flat, feeble, and scant ; but the love of God is a great deep, for ever fresh, and full and flowing. Here are those springs of the sea of which we spake : "Herein is love !"

II. I want your attention a little longer while I speak as best I can upon THE MARVELLOUS OUTFLOW OF THAT LOVE. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Beloved, the love of God is seen in creation : he that studies the mechanism of the human frame and of its surroundings will see much of divine kindness therein. The love of God is to be seen in providence : he that watches the loving hand of God in daily life will not need to look far before he sees tokens of a Father's care. But if you want to know when the great deep of God's love was broken up, and arose in the fulness of its strength to prevail over all ; if you would see it revealed in a deluge, like Noah's flood, you must wait till you see Jesus born at Bethlehem and crucified on Calvary ; for his mission to men is the divinest manifestation of love.

Consider every word : "He sent his Son." God "*sent*." Love

caused that mission. If there was to be reconciliation between God and man, man ought to have sent to God; the offender ought to be the first to apply for forgiveness; the weaker should apply to the greater for help; the poor man should ask of him who distributes alms; but "Herein is love" that God "sent." He was first to send an embassy of peace. To-day "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Oh, the wonder of this, that God should not wait till rebellious men had sent to his throne for terms of reconciliation, but should commence negotiations himself!

Moreover, God sent such a One: he "sent *his Son*." If men send an embassy to a great power they select some great one of their nation to wait upon the potent prince; but if they are dealing with a petty principality they think a subordinate person quite sufficient for such a business. Admire, then, the true love of the infinitely gracious God, that when he sent an embassy to men he did not commission an angel nor even the brightest spirit before his throne; but he sent his Son,—oh, the love of God to men! He sent his equal Son to rebels who would not receive him, would not hear him, but spat upon him, scourged him, stripped him, slew him! Yes, "he spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all." He knew what would come of that sending of him, and yet he sent him.

"Jesus, commission'd from above,
Descends to men below,
And shows from whence the springs of love
In endless currents flow.

"He, whom the boundless heaven adores,
Whom angels long to see,
Quitted with joy those blissful shores,
Ambassador to me!

"To me, a worm, a sinful clod,
A rebel all forlorn:
A foe, a traitor, to my God,
And of a traitor born."

Note further, not only the grandeur of the ambassador, but the tenderness of the relationship existing between him and the offended God. "He sent his Son." The previous verse says, "His only-begotten Son." We cannot speak of God except after the manner of men, for God in all his glory is incomprehensible; but speaking after the manner of men, what must it have cost Jehovah to take his only Son from his bosom to die? Christ is the Father's self; in essence they are one: there is but one God. We do not understand the mystery of the Trinity in unity, but we believe it. It was God himself who came hither in the person of his dear Son: he underwent all: for we are "the flock of God which he hath purchased with his own blood." Remember Abraham with the knife unsheathed, and wonder as you see him obey the voice which says, "Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest, and offer him for a sacrifice." Remember yet again that the Lord actually did what Abraham in obedience willed to do: he gave up his Son! "It pleased the Father to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." Christ's death was in fact God in human form

suffering for human sin; God incarnate bleeding because of our transgressions. Are we not now carried away with the streams of love? I speak my best, my brethren; but if my words were what they ought to be they would set your souls on fire. Is not all heaven still astounded at the death of the Only-begotten? It has not recovered from its amazement that the heir of all things should bow his head to death. How can I fitly tell you how much God loved the world when he gave his Only-begotten to die that sinners might live!

Go a step further. "God sent his Son *to be a propitiation*," that is, to be not only a reconciler, but the reconciliation. His sacrifice of himself was the atonement through which mercy is rendered possible in consistency with justice. I have heard men say with scorn that God required a sacrifice before he would be reconciled, as if that were wrong on the part of the Judge of all. But let me whisper in their ears: God required it, it is true, for he is just and holy; but God found it himself. Remember that—Jehovah found the ransom which he demanded. It was himself, his own Son, one with himself, that became the propitiation and the reconciliation. It was not that God the Father was unkind, and could not be placated unless he smote his Son; but that God the Father was so kind that he could not be unjust, so supremely loving that he must devise a way by which men could be justly saved. An unjust salvation would have been none at all. The Lord found the reconciliation—I will not say in the sufferings of Christ, though that is true; I will not say in the death of Christ, though that is true; but I will put it in Scriptural words, and here we have it in 1 John ii. 2: "He"—that is, Jesus himself—"is the propitiation for our sins." The sent One in himself, as well as in all that he did and all that he suffered, is the reconciliation between God and man. "Herein is love!" for in order that there might be peace and love between man and God, God finds the sin-offering, becomes himself the atonement. that love might reign supreme.

What seems to me the most wonderful thing of all is that the Lord Jesus should deal, not only with our sorrow, but with our sin; for "he is the propitiation for our *sins*." That God should deal with us as to our virtues, if we had any; that he should deal with us as to our love, if we had any, might not seem so difficult; but that he should send his Son to dwell with us as sinners—ay, and to come into contact with our sins, and thus to take the sword, not only by its hilt, but by its blade, and plunge it into his own heart, and die because of it, this is a miracle of miracles. O friends, Christ never gave himself for our righteousness, but he laid down his life for our sins. He viewed us as sinners when he came to save us. "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." If I had not found Christ till this very minute, I hope I should find him now as my mind drinks in this doctrine. By God's Spirit there seems to me to be such a window opened that even despair may see the light, for if the thing which God sent his Son to deal with was the sin of man, then I, even though I am nothing but a mass of loathsomeness and sin, may yet enjoy the infinite love of God. Oh, guilty ones, hear these words, which are more sweet than music, and fuller of delight than all poetry; for even the harps of angels never rise to higher measures than these which I do so poorly and simply rehearse in your ears,—even

these glad tidings, that God who made the heavens and the earth, whom ye have offended, wills not that you die, but loves you so greatly that he opens up a road of reconciliation through the body of his own dear Son. There was no other way by which you could be reconciled to God, for had he reconciled you to a part of himself and not to his justice, you had not been in very truth at all reconciled to God. It is now to God completely just, holy, whose anger burns against sin; it is to him that you are reconciled by faith in Christ Jesus, through the laying down of his life for men. Oh that God would bless this to all who hear the glad tidings!

III. We come at last to think of the CONSEQUENT OUTFLOW OF LOVE FROM US,—“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” Our love then to one another is simply God’s love to us, flowing into us, and flowing out again. That is all it is. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us,” and then we love others. You have seen a noble fountain in a continental city adorning a public square. See how the water leaps into the air; and then it falls into a circular basin which fills and pours out its fulness into another lower down, and this again floods a third. Hear the merry plash as the waters fall in showers and cataracts from basin to basin! If you stand at the lower basin and look upon it and say, “Herein is water;” that is true, and will be true of the next higher one, and so forth; but if you would express the truth as to where the water really is, you may have to look far away, perhaps upon a mountain’s side, for there is a vast reservoir from which pipes are laid to bring these waters and force them to their height that they may descend so beautifully. Thus the love we have to our fellow-creatures drops from us like the descending silvery cataract from the full basin, but the first source of it is the immeasurable love of God which is hidden away in his very essence, which never changes, and never can be diminished. Herein is love? If you and I desire to love our fellow Christians and to love the fallen race of man, we must be joined on to the aqueduct which conducts love from this eternal source, or else we shall soon fail in love.

Observe, brethren, then, that as the love of God is the source of all true love in us, so a sense of that love stimulates us. Whenever you feel that you love God you overflow with love to all God’s people; I am sure you do. It is when you get to doubt the love of God that you grow hard and cold; but when you are fired with the love of a dying Saviour who gave himself for you, you feel as if you loved every beggar in the street, and you long to bring every harlot to Christ’s dear feet; you cannot help it. Man, if Christ baptizes your heart into his love, you will be covered with it, and filled with it.

Your love will respect the same persons as God’s love does, and for the same reasons. God loves men; so will you; God loves them when there is no good in them, and you will love them in the same way. Sometimes the wickedness of men kindles in the heart of a true Christian a stronger affection for them. The deeper down they are the more they want a Saviour. Did not our Moravian brethren feel when they went out as missionaries that they would prefer to go first to the most barbarous tribes?—for they said, “The more degraded they are the more they need a Saviour.” And should not the missionary spirit

make believers feel, if men are sunk until they are as low as brutes, and as savage as devils, that this is the stronger reason for our being eager to bring them to Christ? I hope that abominable spirit which used to come in among Christian people has been kicked away to its father the devil, where it ought to be: I mean the spirit which despises the poor and the fallen. When I have heard people say, "What is the good of looking after such riff-raff?" I have been saddened. The church of God feels that the souls of the meanest are precious,—that to save the most foul, the most ignorant, the most degraded, the most brutalized man or woman that ever lives is an object worthy of the effort of the whole church, since God thought it worthy of the death of Jesus Christ that he might bring sinners dead in sin to live unto himself.

Brothers and sisters, we shall not have grasped the truth unless we feel that our love to men must be practical, because God's love to us was so. His love did not lie pent up like the waters in the secret caverns of the earth, but it welled up like the waters in the days of Noah, when we read that the fountains of the great deep were broken up. In the gift of the Lord Jesus we behold the reality of divine love. When we see the poor we must not say, "Be ye warmed; be ye filled; I am sorry for you"; but we must let our love relieve them from our stores. If we see the ignorant we must not say, "Dear me, the church is neglecting the masses; the church must wake up"; but we must bestir ourselves and struggle ourselves to win sinners. If there be any near you who are degraded, do not say, "I wish somebody would go after them." No; go after them yourself. We have each one a mission: let that mission be fulfilled.

Our love ought to follow the love of God in one point, namely, in always seeking to produce reconciliation. It was to this end that God sent his Son. Has anybody offended you? Seek reconciliation. "Oh, but I am the offended party." So was God, and he went straight away and sought reconciliation. Brother, do the same. "Oh, but I have been insulted." Just so: so was God: all the wrong was towards him, yet he sent. "Oh, but the party is so unworthy." So are you; but "God loved you and sent his Son." Go you and write according to that copy. I do not mean that this love is to come out of your own heart originally, but I do mean that it is to flow out of your heart because God has made it to flow into it. You are one of those basins of the fountain: love has poured into you from above, let it run over to those who are below. Go forth at once, and try and make reconciliation, not only between yourself and your friend, but between every man and God. Let that be your object. Christ has become man's reconciliation, and we are to try and bring this reconciliation near to every poor sinner that comes in our way. We are to tell him that God in Christ is reconciled; we are to say to him, "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." Mark that word! It tallies with that other, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." God is now able to deal on gospel terms with the whole race. We need never think that we shall meet with men to whom God will not consent to be reconciled. The propitiation is such that whosoever comes to God shall be received through it. God is always within to receive every soul that comes to him by

Jesus Christ. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Your work and mine is reconciliation, and everything that tends that way.

When we have done all, what then? We shall have nothing whereof to glory. Suppose a man should become so loving that he gave himself wholly up for his fellow-creatures, and actually died for them, would he have anything to boast of? Read my text over again. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we *ought* also to love one another"; so that if you get to the highest point of self-sacrifice you will never be able to boast, for you have only then done what it was your duty to have done. Thus you see the highest grade of Christianity excludes all idea of salvation by works, for when we come up to its utmost pitch, if we give our body to be burned for love, yet still we have done no more than it was our duty to have done, considering the tremendous obligations under which the love of God has laid us.

If you had to manage waterworks for the distribution of water all over this city, and there was a certain pipe into which you poured water, and none ever came out at the other end, do you know what you would do? You would take it out and say, "This does not suit my purpose: I want a pipe that will give out as well as receive." That is exactly what the Lord desires of us. Do not selfishly say, "I want to sit down and enjoy the love of God. I shall never say a word to anybody about Christ. I will never give a poor creature so much as a brass farthing; but I want to sit down and be solaced with the love of God." If you think thus, you are a pipe plugged up; you are of no use; you will have to be taken out of the system of the church; for the system of love-supply for the world requires open pipes, through which love divine may freely flow. May the Lord clear you, and fill you, so that out of you there may continually flow rivers of living water. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—1 John iv.

HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—199, 782, 803.