

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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UNPURCHASABLE LOVE.

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## A Sermon

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DELIVERED BY

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“If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.”—Song of Solomon viii. 7.

THAT is a general truth, applying to all forms of real love; you cannot purchase love. If it is true love, it will not run on rails of gold. Many a marriage would have been a very happy one if there had been a tithe as much love as there was wealth; and, sometimes, love will come in at the cottage door, and make the home bright and blest, when it refuses to recline on the downy pillows of the palace. Men may give all the substance of their house, and form a marriage bond; the bond may be there, but not that which will make it sweet to wear. “If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.”

Who, for instance, could purchase a mother's love? She loves her own child specially because it is her own; she watches over it with sedulous care, she denies her eyes the necessary sleep at night if her babe be sick, and she would be ready to part with her own life sooner than it should die. Bring her another person's child, and endow her with wealth to induce her to love it; and you shall find that it is not in her power to transfer her affection to the son or daughter of a stranger. Her own child is exceedingly precious to her, and another infant, that to an unprejudiced eye might be thought to be a far more comely babe, shall receive tenderness from her, for the woman is compassionate; but it can never receive the love that belongs to her own offspring.

Take, again, even the love of friends; I only instance that just to show how true our text is in relation to all forms of love. Damon loved Pythias; the two friends were so bound together that their names became household words, and their conduct towards one

another grew into a proverb. Yet Damon never purchased the heart of Pythias, neither did Pythias think to pay a yearly stipend for the love of Damon. The introduction of the question of cost would have spoilt it all; the very thought of anything mercenary, anything like payment on the one side or receipt upon the other, would have been a death-blow to their friendship. No; if a man should give all the substance of his house even for human love, for the common love that exists between man and man, it would utterly be contemned.

Rest assured that this is pre-eminently true when we get into higher regions, when we come to think of the love of Jesus, and when we think of that love which springs up in the human breast towards Jesus when the Spirit of God has renewed the heart, and shed abroad the love of God within the soul. Neither Christ's love to us nor our love to him can be purchased; neither of these could be bartered for gold, or rubies, or diamonds, or the most precious crystal. If a man should offer to give all the substance of his house for either of these forms of love, it would utterly be contemned.

I. We will begin at the highest manifestation of love, and commune together upon it. So let me say, first, that **THE LOVE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST IS ALTOGETHER UNPURCHASABLE.**

This fact will be clear to us if we give it a moment's careful thought. Indeed, so clear is it that I scarcely like to multiply words upon it, and I do so only that you may dive the deeper into this glorious truth. It must be quite impossible to purchase the love of Christ, because *it is inconceivable that he ever could be mercenary.* It would be profane, surely, it would amount to blasphemy, and a very high degree of it, to suppose that the love of his heart could be bought with gold, or silver, or earthly stores. No, if he loves, it must be all free, like his own royal self. If he deigns to cast his eyes so far downward as to view the creatures of an hour, and to set his love upon them so that his delights are with the sons of men, it is not possible that he could gain aught from them. Nay, were we angels, we could not think that he could love us because of some service we could render, or some price we could pay to him. The bare idea runs cross and counter to all we know of Jesus; it is a flat contradiction of all our beliefs and all our knowledge concerning him. He loves us because he pities us, but not because there is a fee when he comes to us as the great Physician. He instructs us because he grieves over our ignorance, and because he knows the sorrow of it, and would have us learn of him; but his instructions are not given in order that we may each one bring our school pence to him. He labours, it is true; but none shall say that he labours for hire; though if he asked all worlds for his hire, he might well claim them for such labours as those which he has performed. The feats attributed to Hercules are nothing compared with the wonders wrought by Christ. He has cleansed stables far more filthy than the Augean, and slain monsters far more terrible than the hydra-headed demons of the ancient fables. True, "*He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied;*" there was a joy that was set before him, for which he endured the cross, despising the shame; yet the love that lay at the bottom of it all was love unbought, and love unsought, and love in which not so much as a single atom of any-

thing like selfishness could ever be discovered. The pure stream of his love leaps like the crystal rill, and there is no sediment that can be found in it; it is altogether unmixed love to us.

Besides, brethren, there is another point that renders this idea of purchasing Christ's love as impossible as the first thought shows it to be incredible; for *all things are already Christ's*. Therefore, what can be given to him wherewith his love could be purchased? If he were poor, we might enrich him; but all things are his. "He *was* rich," says the apostle; "he *is* rich," we also may reply. He could say to us, at this moment, if we were so foolish as to attempt to bribe him to win the love of his heart, "I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he-goats out of thy folds. For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountain: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof." All things are Christ's, not only on this speck of a world, but throughout the universe. The things that are seen by us are as nothing compared with the things that we have not seen; yet all belong to Christ, and he has the power to create ten thousand times more than ever yet have been formed by him. There is nothing which he conceives in his infinite mind but he could at once fashion it by his almighty power; there is nothing he might desire but he could in an instant command it to appear before him. "Let it be," he might say, and it would be even as he had said. Wherewith, then, could you bribe him, and where is the substance of your houses that you would give in exchange for his divine love? O ye who dwell in houses of clay, where is the substance which you could bring to him who is Lord of heaven and earth? Our substance? It is but a shadow. Our wealth? It is a child's plaything in his sight; it is nought compared with his boundless riches.

Let us also note that, if Christ's love could be won by us by something we could bring to him or do for him, it would suppose that there was something of ours that was of equal merit and of equal value with his love, or, at any rate, *something which he was willing to accept as bearing some proportion to his love*. But, indeed, there is nothing of the sort. Gold and silver,—I scarcely like to mention them in the same connection with the love of Christ. I am sure our poet was right when he said,—

"Jewels to thee are gaudy toys,  
And gold is sordid dust."

Think of the difference between gold and the love of Christ in the hour of pain, in the hour of depression of spirit; what can the strong boxes of the merchant do for him then? But one drop of the love of Christ helps him to bear up, however fast the heart may palpitate, or however much the spirits may have been cast down. What is the use of earthly riches when one comes to die? One laid his money bags close to his heart, to see if they could make a plaster that would give him rest, but they were hard and cold; but the love of Jesus, like the touch of the king's hand in the old superstition, healeth even the disease of death itself, and makes it no longer death to die. There is

nothing, then, by way of treasure that could be compared with the love of Christ; I will say it, and every believer here will agree with me, that there is no emotion we have ever felt in our most sanctified moments, there is no holy desire that has ever flashed through our soul in our most hallowed times, there is no seraphic longing that has ever been begotten in us when the Spirit of God has been most operative in our hearts, that we should dare to put side by side with the love of Christ, and say that it was at all fit to be reckoned as a fair price for it. Our best is not one-thousandth part as good as Christ's worst. Our gold is not equal to his clay. There is nothing that can be found in us, or that ever will be in us, that we should dare to say could for a moment stand in comparison with his love.

Well, then, since there is no coin of metal, or emotion of mental condition, or power of spiritual grace, that could be counted out or weighed as the purchase price of Christ's love, we will not dream of having anything of the kind; for there comes, at the back of this thought, the consciousness that, even if we do possess anything that is really valuable, if there is something about us now that is commendable, and pure, and acceptable, yet *it all belongs to Christ already*. We have nothing with which we can buy anything of him, because all we have belongs to him. Under the righteous law of God, all the good of which we are capable is already due to our Creator. His command is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Very comprehensive, very sweeping, are the demands of the law of the Lord. You must not imagine that there is the slightest truth in the idea that man may come to do more for Christ than it is his duty to do; this cannot be, for all that is possible for us to do, is already Christ's. "Ye are not your own," and yet you talk about giving yourself to him. You belong to him now, you Christians, doubly so; and all men are under obligation to Christ even for the temporal favours he has bestowed upon them. You, believer, cannot say, "Now I am going to do for Christ something more than, I think, might absolutely be claimed by him." Why, if you are really what you claim to be, you are his already, body, soul, and spirit! All your time, all your money, all your faculties, all the possibilities that are in you, are all his now; and therefore, wherewithal shall you come to purchase his love? No, it cannot be purchased; that is certain for many other reasons besides these which I have given you.

But what a blessing it is that *we have the love of Christ, though we could not purchase it!* The Son of God hath loved us; he has bestowed upon us what he never would have sold us; and he has given it to us freely, "without money and without price." And, beloved, this love is no new thing. He loved us long before we were born. When his foreknowledge sketched us in his mind's eye, he beheld us in love. He proved his love, too. It was not merely contemplative love, but it was practical love, for he died for us before we knew anything of him, or were even here to learn about him. His love is of such a wondrous kind that he always will love us. When heaven and earth have passed away, and like a scroll the universe shall be rolled up, or be put away like a worn-out vesture, he will still love us as he loved us

at the first. The greatest wonder to me is that this unpurchasable love, this unending love is mine; and you, my brethren and sisters, can always say, each one of you, if you have been regenerated, "This love is mine; the Lord Jesus Christ loves me with a love I never could have purchased."

Peradventure, someone is saying just now, "I wish I could say that." Do you really wish it? Then, let the text serve to guide you as to the way by which you may yet know Christ's love to you. Do not try to purchase it, abandon that idea at once. Perhaps you say, "I never thought of buying it with money." Possibly not, but the mass of mankind think of purchasing it in some way or other. They hear from their priests of certain ceremonies, and they attach great importance to them, and offer them as a bribe to Christ; but these things will never buy his love. They then resort to prayers,—not prayers from the heart, but prayers said as a sort of punishment; and it is thought by many that surely these will procure his love, but they never will. We have even known some who have punished themselves, tortured themselves, thinking they would get Christ's love in that fashion. Now, if I knew anybody who tried to win my love by making himself miserable, I should say to him, "My good fellow, you will never make me love you in that way; be as happy as you can, that method is a great deal more likely to touch my heart than the other." I don't believe that penance and mortification afford any pleasure to God; I think he would be more likely to say, "Poor silly creatures; when I make gnats, I teach them to dance in the summer sunshine; when I make the fish of the sea, they leap up from the waves with intense delight; and when I make birds, I show them how to sing." God hath no delight in the miseries of his creatures, and the flagellations that fools give to themselves they deserve for their folly, but they certainly bring no pleasure to the heart of God. It is vain to think of purchasing the love of Christ in such a way.

"But surely, surely, we may do something. We will give up this vice, we will renounce that bad habit, we will be strict in our religiousness, we will be attentive to all moral duties." So you should; but when you have done all that, do you think you have done enough to win his love? Is the servant, who has only done what he ought to have done, entitled to the love of his master's heart because of that? Thou shalt not win Christ's love so; if thou hast his love shed abroad in thy heart, thou hast infinitely more than thou hast ever earned. Suppose any person here were to say, "I do feel so resolved to be saved that I will give all I have in this world to some good cause, and then I will give myself to go abroad into foreign lands, to some fever-stricken place, to die in the service of God." Ah! shouldst thou do all that, thou wouldst utterly be contemned if thou didst think thus to purchase the love of God. Will he be bartered with? Will he put up his heart to be sold in the market, he whose very temple was defiled by the presence of buyers and sellers? It cannot be. Go thou, and chaffer, and bid, and barter with thy fellow-men; even they will disdain thee if thou thinkest that love is thus to be procured, but dream not that thou art thus to deal with thy God. I say again, it cannot be. The text does not merely say that the price would

be refused, but "it would utterly be contemned." Love would open her bright eyes, and look at the man, and then she would frown, and say, "How canst thou insult me so? Take back thy gold, and be-gone;" and God's great love, even when his pity was in the ascendant, would but weep a tear, and then reply, "I pity thee, for thou knowest not what thou art doing; and I despise the price thou bringest to me. How couldst thou think that I was such an one as thyself, and that my love could be purchased with paltry pelf that thou canst bring?"

We cannot spare more time for that point, but it is one that you may think over for many a day, and your heart may be charmed with it till you love and bless your Saviour with all your heart, and mind, and soul, and strength.

II. My second remark is, that, IN OUR CASE, NOTHING CAN EVER SERVE AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR LOVE.

If Christ has loved us, or if we are desirous of realizing that he has done so, *the one thing needful and essential is that we have true love to him.* God's demand of each one who professes to be his child is, "My son, give me thine heart." There are many who would like to be thought to be his sons, and therefore every morning they wickedly say, "Our Father which art in heaven," though God is not their Father. If they were to say, "Our father," to him who is their father, they would pray to the devil, for God is no father of theirs. Alas! there are many who want to be thought to be God's children, and they will come and bring to him anything but love. Sad, sorrowful truth!

If God would but say to men, "I will accept *unspiritual service*," he might be the God of the whole earth at once; or rather, let me more truly say that he would be the demon of the whole earth, for men do not care what the religion is externally so long as it does not trouble their hearts. The last thing some people will do is to think. "Give you a guinea? Oh, certainly! Excellent is the charity for which you are pleading. A guinea for the hospital? Certainly. Five guineas for a new place of worship? Certainly. When I have money, I am always glad to give it; but don't you come and bother me with any of your doctrines, for I don't want to hear about them. You religious people are so divided into sects and parties, and you are always controverting and contradicting one another, so I do not want to think about these things." That is a very poor excuse, is it not? Because this seems to be a matter which requires a great deal of thought, therefore this person will not give it any consideration at all; and because those who do think about it do not exactly agree on all points, therefore this man says, "I shall not think of it at all." Because all the charts of an intricate portion of the ocean may not happen to be exactly alike, therefore this man will not even study that part of the sea over which his own vessel must go, although there all the charts do agree! He makes an excuse upon some trivial matter to neglect altogether the steering of his vessel. He will strike upon a rock one day, and he will have no one to blame for it but himself.

"Oh!" says another person, "I don't mind saying prayers; or I will go to church and listen to the reading of prayers. I don't mind hearing sermons, but don't come and tell me that *I have to repent of my sins.* I cannot do it; I do not understand what you mean. I join in

'the General Confession' every Sunday; I say that I am a miserable sinner though I don't know that I am particularly miserable, and I don't know that I am particularly a sinner either; but still, I always say that, and I don't mind saying it. Yet if you come to me, saying, 'Repent,' I cannot do that." Men will offer to God anything but that which has to do with the heart. You may call upon them to torment their bodies, as the priests of false religions have done; and they will not object to that. The fakir in Hindustan will pierce himself with knives, or lie upon a bed of spikes, or swing himself up by a hook in his back, and hang there by the hour together in all but mortal agony. A man will do almost anything except bow his heart before his God; he will not confess that Jehovah is Lord of all, and that he himself is a poor sinful creature who deserves to be punished; he will not obey a law that is spiritual, and demands the allegiance of the secret thoughts and intents of his heart; and he will not accept a faith which is so superlatively pure that it demands that sin be given up, and tells him that even when given up it must be washed out in the precious blood of Jesus, and that a man must exercise repentance towards God and faith in the Saviour or he cannot be saved.

The most unpopular truth in the world is this sentence which fell from the lips of Christ, "*Ye must be born again*;" and, consequently, there are all sorts of inventions to get the truth out of those words. "Oh, yes!" say some, "you must be born again, but that means the application of aqueous fluid to an infant's brow." As God is true, that teaching is a lie; there is no grain or shade of truth within it. "Except a man be born again" (from above), "he cannot see the kingdom of God." No operation that can be performed by man can ever regenerate the soul; it is the work alone of God the Holy Spirit, who creates us anew in Christ Jesus. Men do not like that truth; the spiritual still displeases the natural man. They will profess to worship God in Jerusalem or at Gerizim, and fight about the place where he ought to be worshipped, to show how little good their religion has done them! They will not speak to each other, the Jew will have no dealings with the Samaritan, to prove how unlike he is to the God who makes his sun to shine both on the just and on the unjust! But when you utter this message, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth," they are offended, and turn away.

Still, the truth holds good, whatever men think of it. If thou give not to God thy heart, thou hast given him nothing. If thou give not to God thy soul, if thou love him not, if thou serve him not because thou lovest him, if thou come not to him, and surrender to him thy inner self, thou mayest have been baptized,—immersed or sprinkled,—thou mayest have come to the communion table, thou mayest have bowed thy knees till thy knees have grown horny, thou mayest have prayed till thou art hoarse, and wept till the fountains of thine eyes are dry, thou mayest have given all thy gold, and lacerated every member of thy body with mortifications, and starved thyself to a skeleton, but thou hast truly done nothing towards obtaining love to Christ. The substance of thy house is utterly contemned if thou dost offer it to the Lord in the stead of the love of thy heart.

Love he must have; this is his lawful demand. His people delight to render it; and if thou dost not, then thou art none of his.

III. This takes us to a third truth, which is, that **THE SAINTS' LOVE IS NOT PURCHASED BY CHRIST'S GIFTS.**

The love of saints to their Lord is not given to Christ because of his gifts to them; I must explain what I mean, lest at the very outset I am mistaken or misunderstood. We love our Lord, and we love him all the more because of the many gifts he bestows upon us; but *his gifts do not win our love*. I will show you why. All that he has given me to-day, he gave me many years ago. The covenant of grace was always mine. I heard the preacher tell about it. He told how Christ had died for me; that he had loved me, and given himself for me. Truly, he had done so; he had poured out his blood for my redemption. I would not believe it to be so, or, believing it, I did not think it was of any consequence. Then the preacher spread out the rare gifts of Christ before me, and I saw that he had given these to such as believed in him; but I did not think them worth examining, and I turned away from them. I should never have loved him if he had not given me much more than the substance of his house. I needed his blessed Spirit to show me the value of the substance of his house, and above all, to show me that for which this day I love my Saviour best of all, namely, *himself*, HIMSELF.

Oh, it is "Jesus Christ himself" who wins the love of our hearts! *If he had not given us himself, we should never have given to him ourselves.* All else that may be supposed to be of the substance of his house would not have won his people's hearts, until at last they learnt this truth, and the Spirit of God made them feel the force of it, "He loved me, and gave himself for me."

"My Beloved is mine, and I am his," is now one of the sweetest stanzas in love's canticle. The spouse does not say, "His crown is mine, his throne is mine, his breastplate is mine, his crook is mine;" she delights in everything that Christ has as a King, and a Priest, and a Shepherd; but, above all else, that which wins and charms her heart is this, "He himself is mine, and I am his."

But I meant mainly to say, under this head, that *there are some of Christ's gifts that do not win our hearts*, that is to say, our hearts do not depend upon them. And they are, first, his temporal gifts. I am very thankful, and I trust that all God's people are also, for health and strength. I have lost these sometimes, but I did not love my Lord any the less then; neither do I love Christ this day because I am free from pain. If I were not free from pain, I would still love him. Christ has given to some of you a competence, you have all you want for this world; but is that why you love Christ? Oh, no, beloved! if he were to take all away, I know that you would love him in your poverty. The devil was a liar when he said of Job, "Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face." We do not love God altogether for what he gives us in this world; ours is not such poor cupboard-love as that. We

love him because he first loved us, and we do not pretend to have climbed to that high state of disinterested love in which there is no gratitude mingled with it. We always must be grateful to him, and love him for that reason; but still, temporal things never win our heart's love to God. There are numbers of you who have health, and wealth, and many other things that so many desire, but they never make you love God, and they never will. You love them, and make idols of them very readily, but they do not lead you to love the Lord; while the children of God, who love their dear Saviour, can tell you that they do not love him because of what he gives them, for if he takes from them, they love him all the same. With Job, they say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." They do not love him simply because he caresses them, for if he chastens them, they love him still, and kiss the rod with which he smites them.

I meant also to say that *we do not love Christ because of his temporary indulgence of us in spiritual things*. You know, beloved, our Saviour very frequently favours us with manifestations of his presence. We are overjoyed when he comes very near to us, and permits us to put our fingers into the prints of the nails. We have our high days and festivals when the Bridegroom is with us, emphatically with us. He takes all the clouds out of our sky, and gives us the bright shining of the sun; or he opens the lattices, and shows us himself in a way only second to that in which we shall see him when we behold him face to face. And oh, how we love him then! But, thank God, when he draws the lattice back again, and hides his face, we do not leave off loving him because of that. Our love to our Lord does not depend upon the weather. True, our love is not manifested to him so sweetly when we are in the dark as when he cheers us with his smile, but still it is there all the while. We could not let him go. "Though he slay me,"—though *he* slay me,—he who loves me, though he turn to be my enemy, and slay me,—"yet will I trust in him." We will hold to him still, and love him still, not because of the substance of his house, but because of what he himself is. There are times when we are half inclined to say with the elder brother, "These many years have I been with thee, privileged to serve thee, and yet thou hast not given me so much as a kid that I might make merry with my friends." Perhaps we have been long without the light of his countenance, and have had no love-tokens from him; but for all that we will remain in his service, and abide in his house; and even if our Father should answer us roughly, we will tell him that he is our Father still. We do not love him merely for the substance of his house, but for himself, and because his Spirit has made love to him to be an instinct of our new nature, and has put within us such a principle that we cannot help loving him. Even if we should be called to pass through terrible trials and adversities, and should have to walk a long time in clouds and darkness, yet still would we love him and rejoice in him.

IV. The last observation I shall have to make upon our text is this, **THE LOVE OF SAINTS CANNOT BE BOUGHT OFF FROM CHRIST AT ANY PRICE.**

The love of some persons to religion is very cheaply bought, and

very speedily sold. It is very lamentable to notice the great numbers of persons who are quite content to go and worship God with Christian brethren, and to hear the gospel preached, while they are themselves poor, or in middling circumstances, but who find, as soon as they have accumulated a little wealth, that *the world has a church of its own*, and they must go there, "because, you see, everybody goes there; and if you are cut off from Society, where are you?" I have been asked that question, sometimes, and I have replied, "Where are you? Why, where Christ would have you to be,—'without the camp, bearing his reproach.'" But that place of separation, "without the camp," is a position which is not always taken up cheerfully by professedly Christian people. It is very sorrowful to see how, because God has entrusted them with wealth, they get drawn away from the gospel, and from the Church of God; and though they are troubled a little at first, they soon get rid of one scruple after another, and subside altogether into worldliness.

Well, now, I am not altogether sorry that there is this test in the world. Every good husbandman keeps a winnowing fan; of course, he that is foolish, when he sees a great heap lying on the barn floor, says, "All this is my wheat that I have brought in." He does not want to have it diminished, for it is the result of his labour; but if he is a wise husbandman, he says, "Though I have brought in a great heap, I know that there is chaff with it," and he is glad to have the winnowing fan used, and the corn tossed up that the fresh breeze may blow through it. If the mere professors go, let them go. "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us."

There are some who go away from Christ's people, and renounce religion and love to Christ, because of business. *It will pay better in certain lines not to be religious*; and therefore, as the main thing with them is to get money,—religiously, if they can, but irreligiously, if need be,—therefore, by-and-by they are offended, and they sell Christ Jesus. I am pained to see the numbers of persons who go and live in the suburbs of London, and who make that an opportunity for selling their religion, such as it is. It is not long ago that I stood at a dying bed, and a part of what I heard there was, "O sir, ten years ago, we used to be members of such a church; we came to live out here, but there was no place of worship handy, so we have not been anywhere." That person was dying without hope, after selling Christ for love of a little country air. That was about all it was, and little more was to be gained by it.

"Oh, but!" asks someone, "*do saints sell Christ like that?*" No, not they; these are only the professors who have mingled with the saints. These are like the mixed multitude that came out of Egypt with the children of Israel; howbeit they are not all Israel that are of Israel. The saints sell Christ? No, they are too much like their Master to do that. You recollect how Satan took their Master to the top of a high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." Wicked thief! It was not his to give; yet he tempted Christ in that way, but Jesus answered,

“Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” If any of Christ’s followers are tempted in the same fashion, let them give the same reply. All the substance of the devil’s house could not win the love of that man who has set his affection on Jesus. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” The cruel Romanists have taken the martyrs into the lone dungeon of the Inquisition, and tormented them there in such a way that it pains us even to read or hear of what they suffered. But did they give up Christ? No, not they; they never would. At other times, they have taken the Christians into a palace, and said, “We will clothe you in scarlet and fine linen; you shall fare sumptuously every day; but you must give up Christ.” Yet they would not. All the substance of this world has been laid at the feet of holy men, and they have rejected the price with scorn. I know men to-day, and rejoice to know them, who have sacrificed honour and position among men, who have borne abuse and scorn, and have been glad to bear it, and counted it their privilege that they were not only permitted to have Christ as their Saviour, but also that they were allowed to suffer for his sake. O brethren and sisters, may the Lord so clothe us with the whole armour of righteousness that no temptation may ever be able to wound our love to Jesus! Let us feel, “We can let all else go, but we can never let him go.”

“If on my face for his dear name,  
Shame and reproaches be,”

there let them be for his sake. Give me but a vision of the Crucified, let me see that thorn-crowned brow, let me but gaze into his dear languid eyes so full of love for me, and I will then say, “My Master, through floods or flames, if thou shalt lead, I’ll follow where thou goest. When the many turn aside, I will still cling to thee, and witness that thou hast the living Word, and that there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. I will give up the treasures of Egypt, for I have respect unto the recompense of the reward. I will let the ingots of gold go, every one of them, I will cast them into the sea without regret; but if thou wilt abide in the vessel, my soul shall be content. Bind me to thy altar, for I am but flesh and blood, and may start aside in the trial-hour. Cast the links of thy love about me; chain me to thyself; ay, crucify me; nail me to thy cross, and let me be dead to the world, for then the world will leave off tempting a corpse. Let me be dead with thee, for then the world, that cast thee out, may cast me out, too, and have done with me; and it were well then to be counted as the offscouring of all things for thy dear sake, my Lord!” If a man should give all the substance of his house to bribe the saints to sell their Lord, it would utterly be contemned. By this test shall we prove you, O professors! By this trial shall it be known whether ye can stand firm in the evil day. God grant that you may, for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

## Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

LUKE XX. 9—16.

Verse 9. *Then began he to speak to the people this parable; A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time.*

It is a long time since Jesus left us, and he has not yet returned. Many say that he is coming back very soon; others say, "The Lord delayeth his coming."

10, 11. *And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also, and entreated him shamefully, and sent him away empty.*

They grow bolder, and more wicked, you see; first beating, and then adding shameful treatment to their former cruelty. Men do not come to ridicule religion, and persecute its advocates, all at once; this is an art which Satan teaches by degrees.

12. *And again he sent a third: and they wounded him also, and cast him out.*

They are more violent this time; it comes to actual wounding, and to casting out the servant.

13. *Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do?*

A strange thing happens when the Lord himself comes to a pass, and says, "What shall I do?" Here is infinite wisdom, as it were, at a non-plus; and in that extremity this is the Lord's last expedient:—

13—15. *I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be our's. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him.*

You know the story how this beloved Son of the Highest was all love and pity; and yet, with cruel hands, men cast him out of God's ancient vineyard, and crucified him, hoping that they should be allowed to remain lords of God's heritage.

15. *What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?*

What punishment can be sufficient to expiate such a crime? What vengeance will be poured out upon those who have killed him who came to do them good?

16. *He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others.*

And he did so; he scattered abroad the Jews, and gave the kingdom, for a while at least, unto the Gentiles, and they hear the gospel which the Jews refused.

16. *And when they heard it, they said, God forbid.*

That is exactly what you and I would say, for we, too, have illtreated the blessed Lord of the vineyard and his beloved Son. Lest we should have the heritage taken from us, let us yield up the fruit to him who has the best right to it all.