

Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

“OH, HOW HE LOVES!”

A Sermon

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“Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!”—John xi. 36.

It was at the grave of Lazarus that Jesus wept, and his grief was so manifest to the onlookers that they said, “Behold how he loved him!” Most of us here, I trust, are not mere onlookers, but we have a share in the special love of Jesus. We see evidences of that love, not in his tears, but in the precious blood that he so freely shed for us; so we ought to marvel even more than those Jews did at the love of Jesus, and to see further into his heart than they did, and to know more of him than they could in the brief interval in which they had become acquainted with him. When we think of his love to us, we may well cry, “Behold how he has loved us!”

These Jews expressed their wonder at the love that Jesus had for his friend Lazarus; they did not keep that wonder to themselves, but they said, “Behold how he loved him!” In these days, we are too apt to repress our emotions. I cannot say that I greatly admire the way in which some enthusiastic folk shout “Glory!” “Hallelujah!” “Amen,” and so on, in the midst of sermons and prayers; yet I would sooner have a measure of that enthusiastic noise than have you constantly stifling your natural emotions, and checking yourself from giving utterance to your heart's true feelings. If we were in a right state of mind and heart, we should often say to one another, “How wondrous has the love of Jesus been to us!” Our conversation with one another, as brethren and sisters in Christ, would often be upon this blessed subject. We waste far too much of our time upon trifles; it would be well if the love of Jesus so

engrossed our thoughts that it engrossed our conversation too. I fear that many, who profess to be Christians, go for a whole year, or even longer, without telling out to others what they are supposed to have experienced of the love of Jesus; yet this ought not to be the case. If we were as we should be, one would frequently say to another, "How great is Christ's love to me, my brother! Dost thou also say that it is great to thee?" Such talk as that between the saints on earth would help us to anticipate the time when we shall want no other theme for conversation in the land beyond the river.

I am going just to remind you of some very simple truths in order to excite the hearts of those of you who are coming to the communion to increased love to the dear Lord and Saviour who has loved you so intensely as to die for you. And first, beloved, let us think of *what the love of Christ has done for us*; secondly, of *what his love has done to us*; and then, thirdly, I want to say that I am afraid *our love to Christ will never cause any wonder except on account of the littleness of it*.

I. So, first, let us quietly think over WHAT THE LOVE OF CHRIST HAS DONE FOR US.

When did Christ's love begin to work for us? It was long before we were born, long before the world was created; far, far back, *in eternity, our Saviour gave the first proof of his love to us by espousing our cause*. By his divine foresight, he looked upon human nature as a palace that had been plundered, and broken down, and in its ruins he perceived the owl, the bittern, the dragon, and all manner of unclean things. Who was there to undertake the great work of restoring that ruined palace? No one but the Word, who was with God, and who was God. "He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his own arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him." Ere the angels began to sing, or the sun, and moon, and stars threw their first beams athwart primeval darkness, Christ espoused the cause of his people, and resolved not only to restore to them all the blessings that he foresaw that they would lose, but also to add to them richer favours than could ever have been theirs except through him. Even from eternity his delights were with the sons of men; and when I think of him, in that far-distant past of which we can form so slight a conception, becoming "the head over all things to the church" which then existed only in the mind of God, my very soul cries out in a rapture of delight, "Behold how he loved us!"

Remember, too, that *in that eternal secret council, the Lord Jesus Christ became the Representative and Surety of his chosen people*. There was to be, in what was then the far remote future, a covenant between God and man; but who was there who was both able and willing to sign that covenant on man's behalf, and to give a guarantee that man's part of that covenant should be fulfilled? Then it was that the Son of God, well knowing all that such a suretyship would involve, undertook to be the Surety for his people, to fulfil the covenant on their behalf, and to meet

all its demands which he foresaw that they would be unable to meet. Then the eternal Father gave into Christ's charge the souls that he had chosen unto eternal life though ages, of which we can have so faint an idea, were to elapse before those souls were to be created; and the eternal Son covenanted to redeem all those souls after they had fallen through sin, to keep them by his grace, and to present them "faultless" before the presence of his Father with exceeding joy. Thus, as Jacob became accountable to Laban for the whole flock committed to his charge, Jesus Christ, "that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant," undertook to redeem and guard the whole flock entrusted to his care, so that when, at the last great muster, they should pass under the hand of him that telleth them, not one of them should be missing, and the blessed Shepherd-Son should be able to say to his Father, "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and not one of them is lost." It was in the everlasting covenant that our Lord Jesus Christ became our Representative and Surety, and engaged on our behalf to fulfil all his Father's will; and as we think of this great mystery of mercy, surely all of us who are truly his must exclaim with grateful adoration, "Behold how he loved us!"

I have been speaking of very ancient things, but let us now come to matters that we can more clearly comprehend. In the fulness of time, *our Lord Jesus Christ left the glories of heaven, and took upon him our nature.* We know so little of what the word "heaven" means that we cannot adequately appreciate the tremendous sacrifice that the Son of God must have made in order to become the Son of Mary. The holy angels could understand far better than we can what their Lord and ours gave up when he renounced the royalties of heaven, and all the honour and glory which rightly belonged to him as the Son of the Highest, and left his throne and crown above to be born as the Babe of an earthly mother, yet even to them there were mysteries about his incarnation which they could not fathom; and as they followed the footprints of the Son of man on his wondrous way from the manger to the cross and to the tomb, they must often have been in that most suggestive attitude of which Peter wrote, "which things the angels desire to look into." To us, the incarnation of Christ is one of the greatest marvels in the history of the universe, and we say, with Paul, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." The omnipotent Creator took the nature of a creature into indissoluble union with his divine nature; and, marvel of marvels, that creature was man. "He took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham." For an angel to become an emmet, if that were possible, would be nothing at all in comparison with the condescension of Christ in becoming the Babe of Bethlehem; for, after all, angels and emmets are only creatures formed by Christ, working as one of the persons of the ever-blessed Trinity, for John, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, expressly says, "All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made." O glorious Bridegroom of our hearts, there never was any other love

like thine! That the eternal Son of God should leave his Father's side, and stoop so low as to become one with his chosen people, so that Paul could truly write, "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," is such a wonder of condescending grace and mercy that we can only exclaim again and again, "Behold how he loved us!"

Then, "being found in fashion as a man," *he took upon himself human sickness and suffering.* All our infirmities that were not sinful Jesus Christ endured,—the weary feet, the aching head, and the palpitating heart, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." This was a wondrous proof of love, that the ever-blessed Son of God, who needed not to suffer, should have been willing to be compassed with infirmity just like any other man is. "We have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

But if you want to see the love of Jesus at the highest point it ever reached, you must, by faith, gaze upon him when *he took upon himself the sins of all his people*, as Peter writes, "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." Oh, how could one who was so pure, so absolutely perfect, ever bear so foul a load? Yet he did bear it, and the transfer of his people's sin from them to him was so complete that the inspired prophet wrote, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," and the inspired apostle wrote, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." When a man marries a woman who is deeply in debt, well knowing the burden that he is taking upon himself even though it is enough to crush him all his life, we may well say, "Behold how he loves her!" That was what Christ did for his Church when he took her into an eternal marriage union with himself, although she had incurred such liabilities as could not have been discharged if she had spent all eternity in hell; he took all her debts upon himself, and then paid them unto the uttermost farthing; for we must never forget that, when Christ bore his people's sins, he also bore the full punishment of them. In fulfilment of the great eternal covenant, and in prospect of all the glory and blessing that would follow from Christ's atoning sacrifice, "it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief." We cannot have the slightest conception of what that bruising and that grief must have been. We do not know what our Lord's physical and mental agonies must have been, yet they were only the shell of his sufferings; his soul-agony was the kernel, and it was that which made him cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Then it was that the precious "corn of wheat" fell into the ground and died; and dying, brought forth "much fruit" of which heaven and eternity alone can tell the full tale. I cannot speak of this wondrous mystery as I fain would do, but you who know even in part what it means *must* join me in saying, "Behold how he loved us!"

Further than that, *Christ has so completely given himself to us*

that all that he has is ours. He is the glorious Husband, and his Church is his bride, the Lamb's wife; and there is nothing that he has which is not also hers even now, and which he will not share with her for ever. By a marriage bond which cannot be broken, for he hateth putting away, he hath espoused her unto himself in righteousness and truth, and she shall be one with him throughout eternity. He has gone up to his Father's house to take possession of the many mansions there, not for himself, but for his people; and his constant prayer is, “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.” Jesus has an ever-flowing fountain of joy in his heart, but he desires that his joy may be in you if you belong to him, and that your joy may be full; and everything else that he has is yours as much as it is his, so surely you will again join with me in saying, “Behold how he loved us!”

II. Now, secondly, let us consider WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE TO US, for each of his acts of love should cause us to exclaim, “Behold how he loved us!”

Think, dear brethren and sisters in Christ, *how the Lord dealt with us in the days of our unregeneracy.* He called us again and again, but we would not go to him; and the more lovingly he called us, the more resolutely we hardened our hearts, and refused to accept his gracious invitation. With some of us, this refusal lasted for years; and we wonder now that the Lord waited for us so long. If a rich man invites a pauper to a feast, and the poor man is indifferent to the invitation, or positively refuses to accept it, he gets no second invitation, for man does not press his charity upon the needy; but when we even scoffed at our Lord's call, and made all manner of excuses for not coming to the gospel banquet, he would not take our “No” for an answer, but called, and called, again and again, until at last we could hold out no longer, and had to yield to the sweet compulsion of his grace. Do you not remember, beloved, how you received pardon, and justification, and adoption, and the indwelling of the Spirit, and how the many “exceeding great and precious promises” were brought to you, like the various courses at a royal festival served upon golden dishes adorned with priceless gems? Oh, that blessed, blessed day in which you first came and sat among the guests at the great King's table! As you look back upon it, your heart glows in grateful remembrance of Christ's mercy to you, and you cannot help saying, “Behold how he loved us!”

Many days have passed since then, and I ask you now to recollect *what Christ has done to us since we first trusted in him.* Has his love for you cooled in the slightest degree? We have all of us tried that love by our wandering and waywardness, but we have not quenched it, and its fire still burns just as vehemently as at the first. We have, sometimes, fallen so low that our hearts have been like adamant, incapable of emotion; yet Jesus has loved us all the while, and softened our hard hearts as the glorious sun melts the icebergs of the sea. We were like the insensible grass which

calls not for the dew, yet the dew of his love gently fell upon us; and though we had not sought it, our heart was refreshed by it. Our Lord has indeed proved how he loved us by the gracious way in which he has borne with our many provocations; and think too, beloved, with what gifts he has enriched us, with what comforts he has sustained us, with what divine energy he has renewed our failing strength, and with what blessed guidance he has led and is still leading us! Take thy pencil and paper, and try to set down in figures or in words thy total indebtedness to his love; where wilt thou begin, and when thou hast begun, where wilt thou finish? If thou wert to record only one out of a million of his love-gifts to thee, would the whole world be able to contain the books that might be written concerning them? No; all thou canst say is, "Behold *how* he has loved us!"

There have been times—of which I will not say much just now, for some here would not understand what I mean,—when we have seemed to stand in the very suburbs of heaven, where we could hear the bells pealing forth celestial music from the invisible belfries, and our hearts were ravished with the sound of the heavenly harpers harping with their harps, and the ten thousand times ten thousand white-robed choristers singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. Nay, more than that, the King himself hath brought us into his banqueting house, and his banner over us has been love. He has not only permitted us to sit at his feet, as Mary did, but he has allowed us to pillow our head on his bosom, as John did, and even condescended to let us put our finger into the print of the nails in our rapturous familiar fellowship with him who is not ashamed to call us his brethren. I must not continue in this strain,—not for lack of matter, but for lack of time in which to speak concerning him, so must again say, "Behold how he loved us!"

I must, however, mention one more proof of Christ's love, and that is this, *he has made us long for heaven, and given us at least a measure of preparation for it.* We are expecting that, one of these days, if the chariot and horses of fire do not stop at our door, our dear Lord and Saviour will fulfil to us his promise, "if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." To a true believer in Jesus, the thought of departing from this world, and going to be "for ever with the Lord," has nothing of gloom associated with it. This earth is the place of our banishment and exile; heaven is our home. We are like the loving wife who is sundered by thousands of miles of sea and land from her dear husband, and we are longing for the great re-union with our beloved Lord, from whom we shall then never again be separated. I cannot hope to depict the scene when he shall introduce us to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, and bid us sit with him in his throne, even as he sits with his Father in *his* throne. Surely then the holy angels, who have never sinned, will unite in exclaiming, "Behold, how he loved them!" It is a most blessed thought, to my mind, that we may be up there before the hands

of that clock complete another round; and if not so soon as that, it will not be long before all of us who love the Lord will be with him where he is, and then the least among us shall know more of his love than the greatest of us can ever know while here below. Meanwhile, we have much of the joy of heaven even while we are upon this earth; for, as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

III. The closing portion of my sermon is to be very practical. Did anybody ever say of any one of us here, “Behold how he loves Christ”? If someone did say that of *you*, my brother or sister, was it true? I think I hear your answer, “Oh, I do love him! He knows all things, and he knows that I love him.” But do you love him so fervently that strangers or even your more intimate acquaintances would say of your love to Jesus what the Jews said of his love to Lazarus, “Behold how he loved him”? “I wish,” says one, “I could do so.” Then listen for a minute or two while I tell you of WHAT SOME SAINTS HAVE DONE TO SHOW HOW THEY LOVED THEIR LORD.

There have been *those who have suffered for Christ's sake*. They have lain in damp dungeons, and have refused to accept liberty at the price of treachery to their Lord and his truth. They have been stretched upon the rack, yet no torture could make them yield up their fidelity to God. If you have read *Fore's Book of Martyrs*, you know how hundreds of brave men and women, and children too, stood at the stake, gloriously calm, and often triumphantly happy, and were burnt to death for Christ's sake, while many of those who looked on learnt to imitate their noble example, and others who heard their dying testimonies, and their expiring songs, (not groans,) could not help exclaiming, “Behold how these martyrs love their Master!”

There have been others, *who have shown their love to their Lord by untiring and self-sacrificing service*. They have laboured for him, at times, under great privations and amid many perils, some as missionaries in foreign lands, and others with equal zeal in this country. Their hearts were all aglow with love for their dear Lord and Saviour, and they spent their whole time and strength in seeking to win souls for him, so that those who knew them could not help saying, “Behold how they love their Lord!” Some of us can never hope to wear the ruby crown of martyrdom, yet we may be honoured by receiving the richly-jewelled crown from the hand of Christ as he says to each of his true labourers, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”

Then we have known *some saints who showed their love to their Lord by weeping over sinners and praying for their conversion*. There have been gracious men and women, who could not sleep at night because of their anxiety about the eternal welfare of their relatives and friends, or even of lost ones who were personally

unknown to them; and they have risen from their beds to agonize in prayer for sinners who were either calmly sleeping, and not even dreaming of their doom, or else at that very hour were adding to their many previous transgressions. There have been others, who could not hear a blasphemous word, as they passed along the street, without feeling a holy indignation at the injury that was being done to their best Friend, and at the same time their eyes filled with tears of pity for the poor blasphemers, and their hearts poured out a stream of supplication for those who were thus ignorantly or wantonly sinning against the Most High. They have been like Jeremiah weeping over the lost, and like Moses and Paul ready to sacrifice their own souls for the sake of others, until men have been compelled to say, "Behold how these weeping and pleading saints love their Lord, and love lost sinners for his sake!"

Others have proved their love to their Lord by the way in which they have given of their substance to his cause. They have not only given a tithe of all they had to the great Melchizedek, but they have counted it a high privilege to lay all that they had upon his altar, counting that their gold was never so golden as when it was all Christ's, and that their lands were never so valuable to them as when they were gladly surrendered to him. Alas, that there should be so few, even in the Church of Christ, who thus imitate their Lord who freely gave himself and all he had that he might save his people! Blessed will the Church be when she gets back to the Pentecostal consecration which was the fitting culmination of the Pentecostal blessing: "all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."

Another most admirable way of proving our love to Christ is *by being scrupulously careful to please him in little things as well as in the more important matters.* One of the worst signs of this present evil age is that so little is thought of even the great things of Christ,—his atoning sacrifice, his high priestly character and work, his kingly rule, and so on; while the little things of Christ, those that are less by comparison with these, are often utterly despised. There was a time, in Scotland, when men of God signed the Solemn League and Covenant with their blood; how many would do that to-day? One jewel in Christ's crown, that priceless Koh-i-noor of the crown rights of the King of kings, was sufficient to call into the battlefield the noblest of Scotland's sons; but, to-day, the very crown of Christ itself is kicked about, like a football, by some of his professed servants, for they set up their own fallible judgments against his infallible revelation, and so practically say, "We will not have this Man to reign over us!" In this land, in the most glorious days that England has ever seen, our Puritan forefathers were so scrupulous that men called them strait-laced, sour-faced, bigoted, and I know not what; but, nowadays, many of the truths for which they contended, and for which many of them resisted even unto blood, are said to be unimportant or of no account whatever. The special truth which distinguishes us as a denomination is regarded by many with supreme contempt.

Not long ago, a professedly Christian minister said that he did not care a penny about baptism! If he belongs to Christ, he will have to answer to his Master for that saying; but I could not utter such a sentence as that without putting my very soul in peril. He who really loves his Lord will not trifle with the least jot or tittle of his Lord's will. Love is one of the most jealous things in the universe. "God is a jealous God" because "God is love." The wife who truly loves her husband will not harbour even a wanton imagination; her fidelity to him must not be stained even by an unchaste thought; so must it be with every true lover of the Lord Jesus Christ. God grant that we, beloved brethren and sisters in Christ, may do our Lord's will so scrupulously, in great things and little things, and in all things alike, that those who see us in our daily life may be compelled to say, "Behold how these Christians love Jesus Christ their Lord and Saviour!"

Yet, beloved, remember that, when our love has reached its climax, it can only be like a solitary dewdrop trembling on a leaf compared with the copious showers of love that pour continually from the heart of our dear Lord and Master. Put all our loves together, and they will not fill a tiny cup, and there before us flows the fathomless, limitless, shoreless ocean of the love of Jesus; yet let us have all the love for him that we can. May the Holy Spirit fill our souls to the brim with love to Jesus, for his dear name's sake! Amen.

Exposition by C. H. Spurgeon.

MARK I. 28—45; AND II. 1—12.

Chapter i. Verse 28. *And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee.*

"Immediately." That is, as soon as Jesus had healed the man with an unclean spirit, his fame spread like wildfire. The miracle was reported from mouth to mouth till everybody in that region knew of it. It was said that the words and writings of Martin Luther were carried as by the wings of angels, so speedily was everything that he said and wrote made known far and wide. On this occasion, it was so with our Lord's wondrous deed of mercy and power: "Immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee."

29. *And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.*

"Forthwith," or, again, "immediately." Simon and Andrew and James and John were intimately connected; we are told that they were "partners" in their fishing business. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, seem to have been in a good position in life; we read that their father had "hired servants" employed in the boats. So James and John went with Simon and Andrew into their partners' house when Christ went there after performing that notable miracle in the synagogue.

30. *But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her.*

There were at least four of Christ's followers in the house, yet the mother of the wife of one of them lay sick of a fever. Grace does not prevent suffering in the body; there will still be physical diseases even though in the soul there is spiritual health.