

Heart-Ravishing and Soul-Attracting

by Anne Dutton

Anne Dutton's sermon emphasizes the sweetness of Christ's love, the importance of enduring trials, and the need to trust in God's promises amidst spiritual struggles.

Scripture: Psalm 34:8, Romans 4:20, 2 Corinthians 3:18, James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8

Topics: "Intimacy With Christ", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

Anne Dutton preaches about the believer's intimate relationship with Jesus, encouraging to seek His glory and everlasting love. She emphasizes the joy of being in Christ's presence, the sweetness of His grace, and the desire to behold His glory. Anne Dutton also highlights the importance of enduring trials for Christ, trusting in His power, and resisting the enemy's attacks with faith. She urges believers to hold fast to God's promises, to set faith above reason, and to recognize the battle between the covenant of grace and the covenant of works within their hearts.

Transcript

My Dear Brother in our most precious Jesus,

Your last kind letter I most thankfully received; the Lord made it sweet and savory to my taste. I rejoice before God, and give thanks to Him for the rich display of His kindness towards you, for the bright manifestations of His everlasting love, through the bleeding Lamb with which you have been so highly favored. It is sweet indeed, heart-ravishing and soul-attracting, to be with Christ on the Mount for a few moments, to behold His glory by faith. It is no wonder that when we are blessed with a glance of His infinite beauty, who has the fairest face in both worlds, that we are winged with a desire to see Him as He is, without a veil or intervening cloud, to a blessed eternity. It is spiritually natural to the newborn, when they have a glimpse of the glory of Christ, to long for the full and immediate vision of that infinitely bright and glorious object, in whom all glories meet and forever shine with transforming rays. The language of such souls at such times is--

"Nothing but glory can suffice

The appetite of grace,

I long for Christ with restless eyes,

I languish for His face."

And with the full enjoyment of His blessed self, and with the endless vision of His infinite glory, shall every such longing soul be satisfied.

I rejoice, my dear brother, that the Lord was pleased to bless what I wrote to excite you to take up and endure the cross of Christ, and that you have found it under the rich supplies of the Spirit of grace to be exceeding sweet, light, and easy. Marvelously has the Lord made bare His arm in causing mountains, which stood in our way and seemed insuperable, to flow down at His presence. Do you see how good it is to follow the Lord fully? how mighty He is to save? and how faithful He is to His promise? And will you not learn hence to cleave unto Him in time to come whenever He calls you to follow Him through difficulties? Will you not henceforth put your trust in Him who with a word can break gates of brass and cut bars of iron asunder? that with His word, "Peace, be still," can silence winds and waves when most tempestuous?

The calm you now enjoy is the effect of your Lord's love and power; prize and praise Him for it accordingly, and learn to trust in Him continually. You see, my dear brother, how easily the Lion of the tribe of Judah could stop the roar of the lion of hell where you were most apt to fear it; and how false the father of lies has proved in that suggestion which he cast your way. Learn hence to cleave unto, and trust in, Christ, and not to listen to Satan. And does this enemy roar at you still from a greater distance? Remember your Lord, the Almighty God, has him in chains! Roar he may, but he shall not hurt you, while you keep on the King's highway, nor would the Prince of peace allow the rage of hell in any sort to vent itself against you if His design were not to overrule it for His own glory and your advantage.

Keep close to Christ, love, honor, and obey Him in all things, and then fear nothing. Be valiant for the truth, for the doctrines, the appointments of Jesus, and with all humility, and a single eye to His glory, bear a becoming testimony for the same in word and practice, adorning the doctrine of Christ with a good conversation in Him, and then fear not what either men or devils can do unto you, for "Who is he who shall harm you if you be a follower of that which is good?" What if a thousand reproaches are cast upon you? the Lord will plead your cause, and make your glory so much the greater. Reproaches, meekly borne for Christ's sake, are the honors which free grace puts upon you here, and will be as so many gems to enrich your crown of glory hereafter. With Moses then, "esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt."

I humbly think, my dear brother, from the rich enjoyments which our Lord gives you of Himself, from the great trials which He calls you to endure for Him, and from the angry roars of the enemy against you, that He designs to honor you with some eminent service for Him, and usefulness to His in the present world, in order to a weighty crown of glory in the world to come. Oh, walk humbly with God, and wait to see how His rich, free grace will exalt you. Perhaps all the bright displays of amazing favor which your blessed eyes have hitherto seen are but, as it were, the first opening beams of more refulgent rays of infinite grace and glory which are yet to be cast upon you.

O, my brother, does God love you? He will love you like Himself! God who is rich in mercy, for His great love with which He loved you, even when you were dead in sins, has quickened you together with Christ (both mystically and influentially) that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards you through Christ Jesus! The Lord who loved you from eternity past; who loves you freely, infinitely, and unchangeably; will love you forever, and forever rejoice over you to show new wonders of infinite kindness towards you; therefore, wait on your God continually.

A few hints next as to the things you desire me to write to you of.

1. You say, my dear brother, "That the thoughts and contemplations of the flowings of God's love towards you through the blood of Jesus do so little affect your soul that you are sometimes ready to doubt whether it be not all a mere delusion."

And can it be that a soul who has seen, felt, and tasted the love of God through Christ in its ineffable sweetness, in its all-conquering power and soul-transforming glory, should, after this, be ready to doubt, if all be not a mere delusion? Ah! yes; when the efficacious influence of love's sweetness, power, and glory is withdrawn, a believer, in times of temptation, through the strength of unbelief, may be ready to doubt, yes, even yield to doubt, if the reality of his own experience be not all a mere delusion, so unsteady in faith is a believer himself, though set upon a rock of ages, until his goings are established; until the Lord, taking him by the arms, has taught him to go--to go by faith, without the prop of spiritual sense--until he is eminently sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, and has a steeled assurance of faith given him.

And yet I am persuaded that, if at the same time of such inward hesitations a believer were set upon by outward enemies, who should say but the same things to him which Satan indiscernibly suggests to his mind, his soul would rise up in arms against them, and boldly stand on God's side as a witness for Him and His infinite love, and the truth and reality of his own experience thereof; but the enemy being within, the soul often discerns him not until it is wounded by him; it yields to hold a parley with Satan, supposing it to be only the reasoning of its own mind. But such parleys are exceedingly dangerous; the soul thereby enters into temptation, disbelieves God, and credits the father of lies; dishonors infinite love, truth, and faithfulness; weakens his own faith and every grace; joins with God's enemy to reproach and deny His work--a work in which His brightest glory shines; yes, gives the enemy vast advantages over him. Then let such souls beware, and whenever put upon this kind of doubting, let them be assured that the enemy is just before them, set in battle-array against them, and, instantly asking support of the Captain of salvation, let them gird on their armor, stand to their arms, and as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, resist the devil, steadfast in faith, and away he shall flee from them, to God's honor and to their joy, both present and eternal.

But perhaps, my brother, you will ask, "What must I say to Satan when he tempts me?" Tell him, God, the God of infinite purity, through His sacrificed Son, loves sinners; that He can, does, and will love them freely, notwithstanding all their unloveliness and ingratitude and evil requiting of His for the infinite kindness of His manifested love; that as a sinner, the very chief, you will go hide yourself in the Lamb's wounds and blood, and that there you shall now and forever find God to be unto you the God of love and peace. Tell him, you will confess and bewail your ingratitude before God, and that He will forgive the iniquity of your sin; but you will not doubt His love, or think the shine of it on your soul to be a delusion, because the father of lies suggests it. And if Satan finds you take this course, and answer him thus, you will soon find him depart from you. And if he returns again, as he thinks, at a more convenient season, as often as he appears resist him, steadfast in the faith, and you shall find that he flees before you.

And for your own satisfaction concerning this doubt, which is raised from the greatness of God's love and the littleness of your love to Him, or the small influence it has on your heart, whence you are put upon thinking that if the manifestation of so great a love was real it would have greater effect upon your soul, consider that this great love is not always greatly manifested. There are times wherein it is, and times wherein it is not manifested, wherein it shines, and wherein it does not shine on the soul. And when love's bright and burning beams do not directly beat upon your heart, wonder not that you are lamentably unaffected therewith and unenkindled thereby.

It is our duty to meditate on the love of God, and He often meets us therein, casts upon us its piercing rays, and kindles up our hearts to a holy flame. But in this, as in all His dealings with us, He acts as a sovereign, and casts His influence as pleases Him, the suspension whereof at one time is designed by him to command and set off the glorious flow of it at another. And at such times of 'suspended influence', we may think of the great love of God, and to our sorrow find that it has but little effect upon our hearts. But when God Himself casts abroad the glory of His love upon our souls, our hearts are instantly set on fire. Love's light never breaks in upon our hearts without love's heat; love's shine, as the cause, is never without love's flame as the effect--God's love enkindles ours. But then, there are different degrees in love's manifestation, and as different degrees of the effects thereof upon us--the degree of love's shine upon us and the degree of love's flame within us, or of our love, enkindled by the shine of God's love--do always hold a strict proportion with and exactly answer to each other.

Do not think, then, my dear brother, that the flowing of God's love to you through Christ are a mere delusion, because the thoughts and contemplations thereof do so little affect your soul, for when you are unaffected therewith, and unattracted thereby, you are not under the immediate flows of all-affecting, all-attracting love. And learn to look for the blessed effects you desire, from their proper causes, and at the proper times of their existence; to look for the powers of your soul being enkindled with the love of God, when it shines upon your heart, and according to the degree of its influence on your soul. Learn, also, from your unaffectedness herewith at other seasons, what a cold, icy mountain your heart is, when the bright sun of infinite love does not cast upon it, its penetrating rays, its melting beams--and humble yourself before God for the hardness of your heart. Learn also, hence, to seek most earnestly communion with God in love--to pray for the Holy Spirit to shed abroad the love of God in your heart--to prize His influence--and to give thanks for the same when you experience it. And no more think that the flowings of God's love towards you through Christ are delusion because the thoughts thereof affect you so little when you are not under love's immediate influence, its bright, its powerful manifestation. But,

2. You say, my dear brother, "Satan often robs me of my comfort by telling me that I carry faith above reason."

Tell Satan, my brother, "That is right. That as revelation is above nature, faith ought to be above reason." Faith is not, ought not, to be without or contrary to reason; but it is, it ought to be above it. There was no ground in nature, no natural reason, for Abraham and Sarah to believe that he should beget and she should bear a son when Abraham's body was dead and Sarah past age. But because God had revealed it, it was fit that their faith should receive it. There was good spiritual reason, though there was no natural reason, that they should credit what God had spoken; because He had revealed it who could not lie, or deceive, who was the God of truth, and infinitely able and faithful to perform what He had promised. And thus Abraham's children, in like manner, are called to act faith as he the father of the faithful was. They are called to set faith above reason, to believe in hope even against hope--to believe that as God has wrought faith in their hearts, to look, to come to His dear Son for all salvation, and as such has given them the promise of eternal life in Christ, so there shall certainly be a performance thereof, notwithstanding a thousand improbabilities and seeming contradictions in themselves, because God, who cannot lie has promised it, who is also able and faithful to do that which He has spoken.

And as they are thus to believe the promise of life in general--that they shall be saved at last--because God has said it, so, likewise, are they to believe all the manifestations of His love to them which He is pleased to make through the application of particular promises of life and grace, for their consolation in the present time, that things are and shall be as God has spoken, because He has said it, who cannot lie; and

this they are to hold fast by faith, notwithstanding a thousand seeming contraries in themselves, and gainsayings which may arise from carnal reason. Abraham considered not his own body now dead as a sufficient obstacle in the way of the promise, nor should his children so consider the deadness of their own souls as to think it a sufficient hindrance and bar in the way of what God has spoken, as if the manifestations of His love to them, through the promise of life, were not true and real, or would not, could not stand, because of their own deadness. Reason is a good handmaid to faith, but a bad mistress. Reason is good when spiritualized and subservient to faith, but bad when merely natural, and domineers over faith.

But once more,

3. You say, my dear brother, "I am amazed to find my heart so prone to a covenant of works."

Bless God that you find it so; not that it is so, but that you find it so to your grief. That same grief which you feel when you find any motions in your heart which gender to bondage, is an evidence that you are one of the free children, or the children of promise. Remember that you have a renewed and an unrenewed part in the same soul--that so far as you are renewed by grace, your heart submits to the reign of grace, or cleaves to the covenant of grace; and so far as in this respect your soul is unrenewed, in so far your heart, your old heart, is for cleaving to the law as a covenant of works. But be of good cheer; for if you were not a child of the new covenant, those motions which you find in your heart of cleaving to the old covenant would be no trouble to you. It is evident from hence that grace has the throne in your heart, that you are under its dominion, that you submit to, like, and approve of its reign, that you choose to be under it as a subject under his lawful prince, whose dominion over him is no burden but a pleasure to him. And be not surprised or amazed that a rebel party still remain in your soul, which rise up in arms at times to set the law again upon the throne in your heart, for they shall never effect their enterprise. And their very attempts being afflicting and grieving to you, it is evident that you do not submit to the law, that, as a new creature in Christ, you do not join with legal motions, but esteem them as rebels against your Prince, and their very appearance in your heart as an usurpation upon your Prince's dominions.

And the trouble and afflictions which legal motions give you make you cry to your Prince for help against them as His and your enemies. The appearance of these rebels makes you prize your Prince the more, and cleave the closer to the glorious reign of His grace. But the case is far otherwise with an unregenerate soul, with a man who is under the law. He likes and approves of its dominion. He is all of one piece. Legal motions are not disagreeable to him, but treated by him as we treat natives and fellow-subjects. But if the motions of the law appear in a regenerate man, they are disagreeable and terrible to him, he belonging to another Prince, and being under the dominion of grace.

Great grace be with you.

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