

# Sermons for Saints' Days and Holidays. (No. 4. St. Philip and St. James.)

by J.H. Newman

---

*The sermon emphasizes the importance of personal love and devotion to Christ, but stresses that this love and devotion must be based on a correct understanding of Christ's nature and person.*

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 16:22, Galatians 1:8, Ephesians 4:14, 1 Timothy 1:3, 2 Timothy 1:13, Titus 2:7, 2 Peter 3:16, 1 John 4:1, Jude 1:3

**Topics:** "Apostolic Doctrine", "Divine Nature"

---

## Description

J.H. Newman preaches about the importance of true love and devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ, emphasizing the need to understand and believe in His divine nature as revealed in Scripture and interpreted by the Church. He uses the examples of St. Philip and historical heresies to caution against deviating from Apostolic doctrine in the pursuit of warm feelings or sentiments towards Christ. Newman highlights the necessity of adhering to the 'form of sound words' and the Apostolic teachings to avoid falling into dangerous errors that may lead to separation from the true faith and compromise with false teachings.

---

## Transcript

"If any man love not the LORD JESUS CHRIST, let him be Anathema, Maranatha."--1 Cor. xvi. 21.

THE services appointed by the Church for this festival of St. Philip and St. James, turn our attention very particularly to the subject of personal love and devotion to our Lord. St. James was, in some sense, His brother. St. Philip seems, by what is related of him, to have had, in some respects, a more simple and uneducated mind than the other Apostles: and, accordingly, to have sought our Saviour with a faith not unlike that with which a pious untaught countryman may be supposed to seek Him now. Thus, when our Saviour had first called him, and he in his turn would persuade Nathanael to come to Him, and Nathanael made the objection so obvious to a Jew, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip did not pretend at all to argue the matter with him, but simply said, as a plain man might, "Come and see."

And again, it was of St. Philip that our Saviour, with a kind of cheerful condescension, made as if He would ask advice, when He was about to feed the five thousand with a few loaves and fishes, and so to prefigure that Divine Feast, which He meant in due time to ordain for the spiritual food of the whole world. "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" The Apostle answered in a homely, straightforward way, as one

having no suspicion that our Lord meant more than He said, "Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little." It would seem quite in unison with this sort of simple-mindedness, very sincere, but rather unreflecting, that St. Philip should take that part which the Gospel of the day records of him, in the farewell conversation between our Lord and His Apostles. When CHRIST had said, He was the way, the truth, and the life: when He had assured them, that if they had known Him, they had known the Father; when He pointed out to them, as the chief fruit of His blessed Gospel made known to the world, that from henceforth they knew the Father, and had seen Him: St. Philip put up a request which shewed how possible it is, even for a thoroughly sincere person, to be very imperfect in his notions of Christian Truth: to be with CHRIST, and yet not to know Him. He said, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Bring us at once to the Beatific vision--bring us into clear and evident communion with Him, whom, as yet, we know only by faith--and that indeed is enough for us. The answer of our Lord is a calm and grave rebuke, intimating, that even at that time, before the Holy Ghost had come, when the knowledge of the Apostles was necessarily obscure and imperfect, St. Philip's ignorance was hardly such as might be excused. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father: and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" Even before the Comforter came, the disciples of our Lord were to be blamed for their thoughtlessness, in not being aware of His divine nature and condescension, that He was the brightness of the FATHER'S glory, and the express image of His Person, GOD of GOD, made manifest in the flesh. And if then, much more now: much more utterly without excuse are those who refuse to know Him as He is, now that the COMFORTER has been so long time with the Church: that SPIRIT of wisdom, a part of whose especial office was to make Christians rightly receive the three great Evangelical mysteries: the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Communion of Saints: according to the promise of our Saviour, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my FATHER, and ye in Me, and I in you."

I say, the rebuke of our Saviour to St. Philip is a clear sign, that when Scripture speaks so highly of personal love and devotion to our Lord as being "the one thing needful," it means love and devotion to Him, not such as we may rashly imagine Him to be without warrant of His holy Word, as interpreted by His Church, but such as He really is. There could be no question about St. Philip's attachment to Him, and yet we see he incurred rebuke, simply for being so imperfect in his notion of his Lord. How would he have fared if he had been really and positively erroneous? if, while he trusted in the Holy JESUS, he had yet closed with rash speculations concerning Him: had made up his mind to consider Him as no more than a great Prophet, especially gifted with the inspiration of the HOLY GHOST? Or again, if he had chosen to regard Him as a created--though ever so glorious--angel? Doubtless, in that case, he would have been charged with something worse than mere thoughtless simplicity; his fault would then have been nearer to Pharisaical presumption, intruding men's opinions and fancies into the place of GOD'S Truth. And yet he might have been really attached to our Lord's Person, and might have depended on Him, and no other, for health and salvation.

Now this point, that CHRIST is to be loved and served, not such as men choose to imagine Him, but such as He really and truly is--this point requires, if I mistake not, to be very seriously recalled to men's remembrance, at the present moment in the Christian Church. For the form which human presumption seems now inclined to take is nearly such as this following: (and, what is very remarkable, it is found among various classes of religionists, who think themselves, and are in many respects, diametrically opposed to each other. But this is, as it were, a point to which, at sundry distances, their errors appear to converge :) namely, That in the matter of acceptance [sic] with God, sentiment, feeling, assurance, attachment, towards JESUS CHRIST, is all in all: that definite notions of His Person, Nature, and Office,

may very well be dispensed with, provided only the heart feel warm towards Him, and inclined to rely upon Him entirely for salvation: that the high mysteries of the orthodox Catholic Faith, the Trinity, the Incarnation, and Communion with our Lord through His Sacraments, are either unnecessary to be distinctly believed, or that such belief will come of itself, if only the above-mentioned feeling of dependence on CHRIST be sincere. Is not this the real tendency of a great deal that is said, thought, and written, at the present moment, in what is called "the religious world?" Is not such the plain fact, whether for good or for evil? A few obvious remarks, then, on the tendency and probable result of these things, may, by GOD'S blessing, have their use, coming, as we have seen they do, in strict accord with the Church Services of the day.

Now, it may be at once allowed, that nothing can be said too high, nothing higher than Scripture has a thousand times said, concerning the saving virtue and acceptableness of true love and faith in JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD; and that, consequently, those who dwell on it exclusively, even in the wrong sense just mentioned, will always, of course, appear to have a great deal of Scripture to plead for themselves. But yet the same Scripture, with a very little humble attention, will show where the mistake lies. Take, for example, such a verse as this, the conclusion of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians: "If any man love not the LORD JESUS CHRIST, let him be Anathema, Maranatha:" let him be excluded from the communion of the Faithful, in the most awful form of any, by which the wilful sinner was pronounced accursed, when the Lord comes to judgment. What more easy than for a Commentator, so inclined, to fasten on such a verse as this, and assume that one only thing, by the laws of the Gospel, should exclude a man from Communion, and expose him to the highest of Church censures, viz. want of sincere zeal, want of love to our blessed SAVIOUR? How plausibly might it be contended, that where such zeal and love is, we are not nicely to inquire into a man's creed; that we may kneel by his side, and worship with him, though our notions directly contradict his concerning the nature of the CHRIST, the SAVIOUR whom we worship, if only both agree to own CHRIST as a Saviour. One might go on for ever applying the text, and others like it, in that way; but, as if on purpose to bar for ever all such bold speculations, see how St. Paul has enabled us to check, as it were, this verse, by comparison of others, which show in what sense its terms are really to be understood.

First, as to love of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, the same phrase occurs again at the end of another Epistle, in a form of blessing, parallel, as it were, to the curse we are now considering. "Grace be with all those who love our Lord JESUS CHRIST in sincerity." What is the "sincerity," the qualification here introduced? In order to serve the purpose of that system which is now becoming so very prevalent, the word ought to mean, simply, "well-meaning;" "freedom from all guile and hypocrisy;" the same, in short, as "being in earnest." But the true import of the word is, in all probability, something very different from this. It occurs but once in the New Testament, at least at all in a kindred sense: viz. in Titus ii. 7. where St. Paul exhorts a newly ordained Bishop, first, "to shew forth himself in all things a pattern of good works," and afterwards, "to shew forth in doctrine uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, and sound speech, that cannot be condemned." The sincerity, therefore, or soundness, or enduring purity, of which St. Paul is speaking, would so far appear, in all probability, to be a quality of the doctrine, not of the believer's mind; or rather, perhaps, of both together. "Grace be with all those who love our Lord JESUS CHRIST in incorruption; with that sound, enduring love, which, being grounded on the truth of His Nature, will be able to withstand all things, as uncorrupt and glorified bodies will withstand the fires of the last day: grace be with all those who love JESUS CHRIST as they will love Him in Heaven, i.e. as truly GOD of GOD, made Man for our salvation."

Next, observe that this anathema is not the only one pronounced by St. Paul in the New Testament. There is one passage more, in which he distinctly threatens the same penalty: and, in all reason, the two must be compared together. Let it be well considered, then, by such as imagine that sincerity of heart is every thing, and doctrine nothing, or very little, what they can make of the awful anathema at the beginning of the Epistle to the Galatians: "Though we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed."

The two verses, compared with each other, lead inevitably to the following result, startling as it may sound to those imbued with the notions of the day, that part of the measure of a Christian teacher's sincerity in the love of JESUS CHRIST, is his agreement in the substance of his doctrine with the system first preached by the Apostles. It is not his amiable meaning towards those around him, no, nor yet what may seem his devout meaning towards GOD, which will shelter him from the Apostolic censure, if he swerve from the platform of Apostolical doctrine. And it is clear that the verse speaks of the whole Creed as a whole, which the Galatians had received of St. Paul. It does not leave them at liberty to choose out which articles they would consider as important according to their notion and experience of practical good, edifying effect, arising out of one more than another. But it supposes them to have received a certain "form of sound words," which no abstract reasoning or theory of their own--nay, more, no miracles or other marks of heavenly authority, would warrant their adding to, or diminishing.

Further, it is plain from the general tenor of the Epistle, that one particular by which this anathema was at that time incurred by some, was affirming the necessity of the Jewish ceremonial law as part of the conditions of the Christian covenant. Now surely there is not a priori any shew of abstract impossibility in a person's holding that error, and yet seeming to himself and all others to love our LORD JESUS CHRIST. Surely, all that in mistaken kindness is now said by way of extenuating false doctrine with regard to the Person of our LORD and SAVIOUR, might have been advanced a fortiori, in bar of the anathema against the seducers of the Galatians, whose mistake at first sight only touched His office. It might have been said, "What hinders, but these or any men may be full of dutiful regard to our blessed LORD, although they be not fully aware of the repeal of those laws of His, which He promulgated from Mount Sinai to be a ritual for His chosen people: and although in consequence they are still for enforcing those laws on Gentile Christians as necessary for salvation?" We see at once by St. Paul's peremptory sentence, how fallacious all such pleading would have been: how impossible to be tolerated within the true Church, and how dangerous to the souls of those who persisted in it after such authoritative warning. We see that the Preachers of Circumcision in those times, although they might feel, and in many respects act, as if they loved our LORD JESUS CHRIST, were not to be accounted as "loving Him in sincerity" and uncorruptness. We see that sincerity, enduing purity of doctrine in certain great points, is a necessary test of that love for CHRIST which is required to secure human error from the anathema of the Church; a necessary qualification for receiving an Apostolical blessing.

This view receives no slight illustration from certain cases in the history of heresy; cases in which the false doctrine has recommended itself in the first instance to unguarded minds by the show of extraordinary love and respect for our Divine Master, and has ended in direct treason and blasphemy against Him. A very remarkable one occurred in Asia Minor, in the earlier half of the third century. St. Paul himself had expressly warned the Pastors of that division of Christendom, that they might expect men to arise of their own selves, who should speak perverse things to draw away disciples after them.

This had begun to be accomplished in former generations by the swarming of Gnosticks and Ebionites in those quarters: heresies which appear at first glance shocking to all lovers of CHRIST. But at the time now

referred to, a more plausible misinterpretation arose; more plausible as a show of reverence to our Saviour's Person: the author of which was one Noetus, either of Smyrna or of Ephesus. We are told of him by St. Hippolytus, a writer almost contemporary with him, that "he was mightily lifted up by his vanity, and seduced by a fancy prompted by an alien spirit, affirmed that the CHRIST Himself, was 'personally' the FATHER, and that the FATHER Himself was born, and suffered, and died.

These things came to the knowledge of the holy Presbyters of that time; by whom he was summoned and interrogated before the Church. At first he disavowed his holding any such opinion: but afterwards he found some to lurk amongst, and having provided himself with associates in error, he tried to make his theory permanent, now reduced into a distinct form. Upon which the holy Presbyters again summoned and called him to account. But he withstood them, using these words: "What evil then am I doing in that I give glory to CHRIST?"

What harm have I done? I glorify one GOD; I know one GOD, and no other beside Him; and that He was begotten and born into the world; that He suffered and died for us." Could any thing be more plausible, according to the notion that all is safe if only men are brought to put their trust in our Saviour's Person alone? Might it not as truly then have been urged, as any one now can urge it, that the distinction of Persons in the glorious Godhead is merely a mode of speech, a scholastic theory, and that all was right if men could agree to worship our Saviour?

The elders, however, of happy memory, before whom Noetus was answering, were aware of no such defence. According to the simplicity of the Gospel which they had learned, probably with allusion to the very words of their creed, they reply, "We also have one only GOD, whom we know and acknowledge in truth; we know CHRIST; we know the SON, and acknowledge Him to have suffered as in truth He did suffer; to have died as in truth He did die; who rose again the third day, and is on the right hand of the Father, and is coming to judge quick and dead: AND WE AFFIRM THOSE THINGS WHICH WE HAVE BEEN TAUGHT." "Then having convicted him, they cast him out of the Church."

It really should seem as if, by especial Providence, this fragment of early Church History had been preserved, in order to shew Christians how to deal with those heretics, who make their appeal with perverse ingenuity to the good feelings of believers at the expense of their orthodox conviction. If there come any man to you talking affectionately of JESUS CHRIST as our Redeemer, but scornfully of the need of acknowledging Him as Very GOD of Very GOD: if the words which have been put into our mouths by the Holy Fathers, Creeds, and Councils, are treated as the mere inventions of Platonists or Schoolmen: we have a clear precedent for the kind of answer we should give: we have no need to canvass objections, or to draw subtle distinctions, we have only to repeat our Creed with those blessed elders, and say, "The things which we have learned, those we affirm." If they say, "What harm do we, giving CHRIST all the glory?" we will tell them "CHRIST has taught His Church by His Scriptures in what way He will be glorified; and it is not for us to tolerate other ways, however they may challenge our admiration for their ingenuity, or our kindness by the seeming sincerity of their inventors."

But such a course is too harsh; too peremptory in its censure of persons, to whom we dare not deny a certain share of well-meaning. This is a natural feeling, as it is natural to shrink, in all cases, from inflicting pain. But if experience show that no apparent piety to our Saviour will secure persons from the deadliest errors, if they allow themselves to take liberties with the old standard of the Father,--what shall we say? will it not then appear, that the better we think of the motives of our erring brethren, the greater their apparent devoutness and sincerity, the more anxious must we be to speak out, and pull them back, if

possible, as brands out of the burning? Now, then what says experience? Take one instance out of a thousand: one of the most important that could have been mentioned; an instance unquestionably and directly relevant, and probably most fatal in its effects on the Church.

Of all the heresies of the Lower Empire, there is none which, at first, appears more venial, more on the side of loyal Christian love, than that of the Monophysites, at least after they had renounced the error of their first founder, Eutyches, touching the reality of our Lord's crucified body. It would seem as if nothing but excessive reverence towards the glorified Son of Man, would lead men to deny the continuance of His human Nature: as though of the two, very God and very Man, the weaker were now, as it were, lost or absorbed for ever in the more glorious. In such a sect, therefore, of all others, one would expect the most entire alienation from those who deny CHRIST'S Godhead altogether. But what is the fact? When, about the year 640, the Saracens first invaded Egypt, this very party, the Monophysites, were the most numerous in that country, their priesthood being especially strong. Most unfortunately, a violent political as well as religious feud prevailed between them and the orthodox, or Greek party, commonly called Melchites, or Royalists, from their loyalty to the Constantinopolitan emperor,--so that not even intermarriages were allowed. For various reasons they considered themselves greatly oppressed: but, after all allowance made for considerations of that kind, it must be owned a lamentable indication of the tendency of their doctrine, that they actually received the Mussulmans with open arms. Their Patriarch of Alexandria, a man whose name long stood very high among them for sanctity, came to a regular treaty with the Caliph's lieutenant; in which it appears to have been stipulated that he, the Patriarch, should be restored to the episcopal throne of Alexandria, the whole sect for their part co-operating with the infidel invaders. As account has been preserved of the interchange of compliments between the Saracen leader and the Patriarch, on the return of the latter to the city, from which he had been long exiled. Amrou received him with the remark, that in all the countries which the Caliph had conquered, he had not met with any person of presence more august, and more worthy of a man of GOD. And he actually intreated, and, as it seems, obtained, his prayers for victory and safety in an expedition which he was just undertaking into West Africa and Pentapolis. The prayers of a Christian Archbishops, presiding over the sect which had separated from the Church on pretence of extraordinary reverence for CHRIST'S Person, were asked, and granted, in behalf of the Mahometan Antichrist, just then on the point of wasting provinces which had been, from the beginning, the pride and glory of the Christian world.

There is, then, nothing extravagant in the supposition that heresy, even in its most attractive form of unusual loyalty to Christ, and jealousy of His honour, may prove but a step towards some God-denying apostacy. Whether or no any movement of the kind be at the moment perceptible among us, it surely will be well to bear such examples in memory. It is well that those who, from amiable confidence in the right feeling of themselves and others towards Him who is our common hope, are apt to make light of differences in doctrine concerning Him: it is well, I say, that that they should be aware to what point, before now, men have been led by such presumptuous differences.

May we not imagine, even at that time, the scruples of some more considerate Copt overcome by such arguments as are now not rarely alleged, when any Churchman is seen to shrink from symbolizing with the corrupters of the Father, and despisers of the Church? May we not, without any violent improbability, represent to ourselves the venerable Patriarch Benjamin reasoning as follows with such an unwilling disciple? "Why should you be so very loth to act with these our Arabian brethren, whom you cannot deny to be our political deliverers?"

True, they deny that our Saviour is the SON of GOD; they do not even allow Him to be the greatest of the Prophets: but remember what Holy Scripture says; 'Grace be with all those who love our LORD JESUS CHRIST;' and surely it is possible for a Mussulman to love JESUS of Nazareth: nay, he cannot help doing so, if he be at all consistent: he must love one whom his own Scripture acknowledge as one of the greatest and most beneficent of heavenly messengers. Be of good cheer then: we and these our new allies are in reality much more unanimous than we have been used to imagine, in what we fundamentally believe.

In religion, properly so called, we do not really differ from them. We all acknowledge with one voice the great facts of the Bible. They add, indeed, those of the Koran: but that is not of so much consequence, it being still possible for us all, in one sense or other, to love JESUS CHRIST. Let us, then, leave of contending about scholastic subtleties, and let us rather unite all our energies against the one common enemy, the exclusive system the old Church, that Church which so unphilosophically insists on our adoring the same LORD, confessing the same Faith, and holding by the same Baptism.

In this way, we shall be left most sure to make our own high doctrines concerning our Lord and his sole uncompounded Nature thoroughly known to our people; and we shall do incalculably more good than we need fear doing harm by this our partial and apparent compromise with what may be erroneous in Mahometanism." If reasoning like this ought to have availed in reconciling sincere Eutychians to the Mussulman connexion, then, and not else, it seems intelligible how those who profess to advocate a peculiarly pure and spiritual view of Christianity, should readily unite with the deniers of the LORD that bought them; and, in other respects, more or less directly compromise the system of orthodox belief, where they think there is, humanly speaking, a fair chance of doing more good in the end.

On the whole, there is evidently no security, no rest for the sole of one's foot, except in the form of sound words; the one definite system of doctrine, sanctioned by the one Apostolical and primitive Church. People say, it is hard to bring men to agreement in this: but so is perfection hard in every duty. And besides, let the question be asked in all seriousness, is it not much harder to ascertain their agreement in right feeling towards our Saviour? If the illustration were not too familiar, one might say, it is like trying the temperature of a room; one man feels hot, and another cold; but those who would be precise and accurate rather settle the point by a thermometer. In truth, it should seem perfectly impossible to know whether two men exactly concur in feeling. And why, then, should it be counted wrong or absurd for them to accept at the hands of GOD'S Church the same form of words wherein to own her system of doctrine, which is one and the same definite thing, and quite independent, surely, of the individual receiving it?

Again: it may be said that so strict a demand of orthodoxy is scarcely consistent with the encouragement given in Scripture to the more implicit faith of persons probably quite ignorant of doctrinal statements: such, for example, as the woman with an issue of blood, who, when she touched the hem of our Lord's garment, was so far ignorant of His true Omniscient Nature, that she thought of being healed without His knowing anything of it. May it not, however, be reasonably said, that her pious and affectionate faith was, in fact, the very type of that which saves men in the devout use of the means of grace which CHRIST bestows on us? According to her knowledge, so she received Him: and must we not receive Him in like manner according to our knowledge, as GOD manifest in the flesh? She came near and touched the hem of His garment, although she could not have explained how the touch should do her any good: and must we not in like manner approach Him in the devout use of His Sacraments, however impossible it must always be for us to understand how they should be the means of grace? She indeed was ignorant of some things: but involuntary ignorance is one thing, profane contradiction, or conceited scepticism, another. She

had, perhaps, what some might account low superstitious notions of the way to profit by our Saviour: and on the other hand, if they who so judge had stood by and seen St. Peter, when, in anger at the very thought of the crucifixion, he took our Lord and began to rebuke Him, and said, This shall not be unto thee; and we may suppose they would have said, He may be mistaken, but any how his fault is on the right side: he cannot endure any low notion of his Saviour; depend upon it, he is the last to deny Him. We know how that proved on experiment; and perhaps, comparing the two together, we shall not be wrong if we conclude that the only safe way is to take GOD'S will exactly as we find it in His word as interpreted by His Church, and not to perplex ourselves with fancies, philosophical or other. So may we hope by GOD'S grace to obtain larger and completer views of our whole condition and duty, and build higher and higher as feeling that our foundation is sure. So may we hope to escape that curse, the terrible accompaniment generally of the Church's anathema, of continuing for ever wavering and unsteady in all the great rules and principles: "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

OXFORD.

The Feast of the Annunciation.

---

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/jh-newman/sermons-for-saints-days-and-holidays-no-4-st-philip-and-st-james/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**