

The Nature of Love to God and Christ, Opened and Enforced

by Samuel Davies

The sermon emphasizes the necessity of genuine love for God as the foundation of true faith and obedience.

Scripture: Psalm 139:23, Matthew 7:21, Matthew 22:37, Matthew 25:41, John 10:32, John 14:21, Romans 5:5-8, Ephesians 2:3, James 2:8, 1 John 4:19

Topics: "Divine Love", "Christian Obedience"

Description

Samuel Davies preaches about the essential nature of divine love to God, emphasizing that without it, all religious acts are in vain. He challenges the common assumption of sincere love to God and highlights the enmity and hatred towards God that can exist in the hearts of individuals. Using the example of Peter's threefold denial and subsequent restoration by Jesus, he urges the congregation to examine their own hearts and ask if they truly love God. Davies provides clear marks of genuine love to God, such as its divine origin, frequent thoughts of God, delight in communion with Him, and a life of universal obedience. He warns of the dangers of not loving God, emphasizing the sinfulness, ingratitude, and inexcusability of such a state, ultimately leading to exclusion from heaven and eternal damnation in hell.

Transcript

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Christ, Opened and Enforced

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The third time Jesus said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." John 21:17

"If anyone does not love the Lord--a curse be on him!" 1 Corinthians 16:22

There is nothing more essential to religion, or of more importance in it--than divine love. Divine love is the sole spring of all acceptable obedience in this life, and the grand pre-requisite for complete happiness in the enjoyment of God in the world to come; and without it, our religion, all our gifts and improvements, however high and showy--are vain. Religion without love, is as great a contradiction as friendship without

love. To worship a God whom we do not love; to adore excellences which we dislike; to profess a religion founded by an enemy--this is the greatest absurdity imaginable. Such a religion must appear abominable both to God and man.

Divine love is the subject of my text, which I have chosen for your present meditation; and you see that I have not chosen a subject which is trifling in itself, or the disputed peculiarity of a party. You need not, therefore, be under apprehensions, that I would proselyte you to anything but the sincere love of God and Jesus Christ. However I would not have you judge of my design by my verbal declarations--but by the apparent tendency of my discourse, of which you will be able to form a judgment when I have finished. Therefore entertain no prejudices or suspicions, lest you deprive yourselves of that benefit you might otherwise receive from your present attendance.

There is so little solicitous inquiry among men concerning the sincerity of their love to God, that it would seem self-evident, and beyond all dispute. Whatever sins they indulge themselves in, however much they practically neglect God and religion--yet still they insist upon it--that they love him sincerely.

But is divine love indeed a thing so common, so universal? We read that the carnal mind is enmity against God. Romans 8:7. And is there no such thing as a carnal mind now to be found upon earth? We are told of some that were haters of God. Romans 1:30; and enemies in their minds by wicked works. Col. 1:21. And are there none such to be found among us?

The heart-searching Jesus, while conversant among mortals, told the Jews, who made so great a profession of their love to God, and suspected their own sincerity as little as any of us, "I know you, that you have not the love of God in you." John 5:42. And were he now to pass sentence upon us, would he not make the same declaration with regard to many of us, who, perhaps, are least apprehensive of it? Is it a needless thing for us to enter into a serious conference with our own hearts, and ask them, "Do I indeed love the ever blessed God, and the only Savior? Will my love stand the test? What are its properties and effects?" Is this, my friends, a superfluous or impertinent inquiry? I am sure it did not seem so to Christ, who put Peter to the trial upon this point no less than thrice.

Our Lord made a meal with his disciples, to convince them of the reality of his body after his resurrection. When it was finished, he turns to Peter, and asks him a very serious question, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?" The very proposal of the question seems to suppose that Peter had given some reason to suspect his love to him, as he had really done, a few days before, by denying him thrice, with shocking aggravations; and with this reference the inquiry was very cutting to Peter, and no doubt made him think thus with himself: "Ah! it is no wonder my Lord should call my love in question, who so lately most ungratefully denied him!" The question is put to him openly, before the whole company, which might perhaps increase his confusion; but it was prudently ordered, that he might declare his love to Jesus as openly as he had denied him, and that his brethren might be satisfied of his sincerity, and recovery from his late fall.

The first form of the question implies a comparison: "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me more than these?" That is, more than these your fellow-disciples? "It is not long since, Peter, that you declared, Though all should forsake you--yet I will not; though all my fellow disciples should prove treacherous--yet I am determined to adhere to you, come what will; and are you still of the same mind?" Peter modestly replies, "Lord, you know that I love you!" As much as to say, "Lord, I own that I have fallen more foully than any of my brethren, and I dare not say I love you more than they do. I dare say nothing of the high degree

of my love, in comparison with others; but, Lord, I must assert the sincerity of my love, as weak as it is, and I humbly adventure to appeal to you, who know all things, and cannot be deceived with fair pretensions, for the truth of my profession."

Peter, no doubt, hoped this declaration would satisfy his Lord. But Jesus, after a pause, put the question to him again, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?" And Peter insists upon his former answer, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you!"

Now he hoped to escape all future questions upon this point. But Jesus, as though he were still suspicious of him, puts it to him a third time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love me?" Peter was grieved that this inquiry should be put to him successively no less than thrice; it cut him to the heart with the remembrance of his base denial of his Master as often, and perhaps with a fear that Jesus would not now be convinced of his sincerity--but was about to expose him as a traitor, and discard him. Upon this he grows warm, and replies with the most passionate vehemence, "Lord, you know all things--you know that I love you!" As much as to say, "Lord, why do you try me so often upon this point? Look only into my heart, which lies all open to your view, and judge yourself, whether I do not sincerely love you. I must confess my late conduct looked very suspicious: and I reflect upon it with shame and sorrow! I am unworthy to be ranked by you among your friends. But, Lord, as unworthy as I am, and as base and suspicious as my conduct was--I must insist upon it, that I do love you; and it wounds me to the heart that you should seem so jealous of me. I cannot give up this point; and I appeal to yourself for the truth of it!"

Jealousy in love, my brethren, suspicion among friends, is a very painful and anxious passion; and never so much so to a pious heart, as when the sincerity of our love to God is the object of it. Such a person cannot be easy, while a matter of so much importance lies under suspicion--but must put it beyond all doubt.

And let me tell you--this is a question in which we are all most nearly concerned. Are our conduct and temper towards God so entirely and uniformly friendly and dutiful, as to put it beyond all doubt that we do truly love him? Alas! are there not many things that look very suspicious in our case? Should Jesus now call each of us by our names, as he did Peter, and ask us, one by one, "Do you love me?" What could we answer? Could we honestly desire him to look into our hearts, that he might see that sacred principle there? And could we produce the genuine evidences of it in our lives?

My friends, if there be an inquiry within the compass of human knowledge which deserves the most solicitous attention, certainly this does! And it is my present design to assist you to come to a determination upon it. I say, we are now going upon this search, "Do I really love the Lord Jesus?"

Come--let us all join in it; let us all resolve to be determined in this point before we leave this place! For this purpose, I shall point out some plain marks of genuine love. And then, supposing that you will have discovered your real character in this respect, I shall address you as divided into two different classes: the friends, and the enemies of Jesus. And as love to God the Father, and love to Jesus Christ, who is God as well as man--I shall not distinguish between them--but speak upon the one or the other, as may be most conducive to my design.

I. I am to point out some plain, genuine MARKS of divine love. And these I shall derive either from plain Scripture; or from the apparent nature and inseparable properties of love.

I need hardly tell you, that while there is so much hypocrisy, flattery, and compliment in the world; a man's mere professing the Christian religion, and a supreme regard to its Founder--is no certain evidence of sincere divine love. Insincerity and treachery, which have done so much mischief in private friendships, and betrayed so many kingdoms, has diffused itself, like a malignant poison, into the affairs of religion; and men dare to compliment and flatter even the heart-searching God! Judas betrayed his Lord with a "Greetings, Master!" and a kiss! And his conduct before that, had the appearance of sincere friendship, otherwise the disciples would have suspected him for the traitor upon the first hint. Therefore there must be something more substantial to evidence the truth of our love, than a mere profession, or the external forms of religion.

Nor does true love consist in a speculative, languid esteem, or a careless, unaffecting good opinion of Jesus Christ. We may think and speak highly of him, and believe very great things concerning him, while the heart is dead and cold towards him; yes, full of enmity against him. All this may be the effect of education, or cool reasoning, and may hover in the head, without sinking deep into the heart, and becoming a governing principle in practice. It is this speculative good opinion of him which, I am afraid, the generality mistake for divine love. They cannot but know that their hearts are habitually careless and indifferent towards God, that they do not feel those affectionate emotions and strong tendencies of soul towards him, which they feel towards all other objects of their love. However, when they happen to think of him, it is sometimes with a kind of high esteem; and this they take to be a genuine love to him--though it has no correspondent effects upon their temper or conduct!

I may add farther, that some may love God upon a mistake; that is, they love him upon supposition that he is quite another kind of being than he really is. But did they conceive of him as he is, he would appear to their depraved hearts rather an object of terror and abhorrence, than of love and delight. For example, they suppose Him so soft, easy, and passive a being--as not to resent their rebellious conduct! They suppose God to be so merciful--as hardly ever to execute justice upon sinners! They suppose Him to be so careless of the honor of His law and government, as to pass by all their disobedience! They suppose God to be so foolishly fond of His creatures, as to advance them to happiness promiscuously, without any regard to their moral character, or the honor of His perfections.

Such a deity as this--is formed exactly according to their taste, to encourage them in sin, and relieve them from horrors of conscience and the fears of eternity! It is no wonder that they should love such a 'god' as this--so like themselves. Even criminals would love a judge of this character. This is not the true God--but the creature of their own foolish imaginations! This is not that God before whom the celestial multitudes cry, "Holy, holy, holy!" and who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; who is a God of truth, and without iniquity; just and righteous; who turns the wicked into hell, and all the nations that forget God; and who will not admit one soul into heaven but what is made holy in temper and practice beforehand. And did they view Him as He really is--they would be so far from loving him, that their carnal minds would rise in enmity against Him!

Now to love God upon such a supposition, is not to please him--but to reproach and affront him; and he resents it as the highest indignity! How would you take it, if a fool or a villain should love you upon a mistaken notion, that you were a profligate, a thief, or a liar, like himself? Would you thank him for such a friendship? No! You would esteem it the basest affront. And when you had convinced him of his mistake, his love would be turned into hatred.

My friends, we must love God for what He is--otherwise we do not love Him at all. We must, therefore, know Him in such measure as He is, before we can rationally love Him; and particularly we must know and delight in those perfections which are most unacceptable to guilty and depraved creatures--His justice, holiness, and infinite hatred of sin--before we can truly love Him!

Having cautioned you against these plausible and popular mistakes, I now resume my purpose, and shall point out some undoubted marks of genuine and sincere love to God. And that I may not perplex you with too many particulars, I shall only mention these four:

that it is of a divine and supernatural original; and that it produces frequent and affectionate thoughts of its object; a delight in communing with him: and an earnest study and endeavor to please him--by a life of universal obedience.

1. If you would determine this important inquiry, "Do I really love the Lord Jesus Christ?" you must previously inquire HOW you came by your love; whether it is the mere effect of human nature, of education, or of anything within the power of man; or whether it was wrought in your hearts by the almighty power of God, after many rebellious straggles and insurrections, and a full conviction of the innate enmity of your carnal minds against him? If it is the spontaneous production of your own hearts, or of natural causes, if you have always been possessed of it, and never found it difficult to obtain or cherish it; if you have not been sensible of a supernatural power working it in you--then you may be sure that it is all delusion!

For though the passion of love is innate in our nature, and is easily excited by a thousand created beauties--yet, alas! it has no natural tendency towards the true God. Human nature in its present state is strangely indisposed and disaffected in this respect, as experience has abundantly convinced us--unless we have been stupidly unobservant with regard to ourselves. A state of nature is uniformly represented in Scripture as a state of enmity against God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, John 3:6; and, therefore, by nature, we are all flesh in the Scripture style. Now, "they that are in the flesh cannot please God," says Paul, "because the carnal mind is enmity against God," etc. Romans 8:7, 8.

The Scriptures everywhere represent us as being saved in the way of reconciliation; now reconciliation supposes a previous variance and enmity. Nay, Paul expressly tells us, that "we were enemies, when we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." Romans 5:10. By nature, we are children of wrath, Ephesians 2:3; and surely we cannot be children of wrath--and lovers of God--at one and the same time! Here, then, you must all plead guilty. Whatever you now are, it is beyond all doubt that you were once enemies to God. It is sufficient conviction against you who you are men, and belong to a race which is universally alienated from God. And now have you ever been brought out of that state? If not--then you are enemies to God still.

You could not pass from death unto life in a dream, or an entire insensibility; for you must have experienced a great change, and you must have been sensible of, and may now recollect a great many deep and affecting sensations that attended it. You must have seen and been shocked at your enmity towards God! You must have been brought to cry in the most importunate manner to God to give you a better temper, and to shed abroad his love in your hearts by the Holy Spirit. Romans 5:5. In short, you are made new creatures; old things are passed away, and all things are become new; and all these new things are of God, who has reconciled you to himself. 2 Corinthians 5:17, 18.

Now if these are the test, what would you say to this question, "Do you love Me?" Some of you, I trust, could answer; "Lord, I am afraid of the truth of my love; but this I am sure of, a great change has been wrought in my soul. Whether I am now a sincere lover of God or not, I am sure I am not what I once was; not only my outward practice--but the inward temper of my heart towards you is vastly altered; it is more filial, affectionate, and dutiful." If any of you can advance thus far in your answer, my friends, it looks comfortable, though you should still be jealous of yourselves. But, sirs, let conscience now deal honestly with you: are there not many of you who are still in your natural state? All your religion is an earth-born, self-sprung thing. You have never been the subjects of a supernatural work of divine grace, nor felt such a great change in the temper of your minds; and if this is your case, I must pronounce, that, however many amiable qualities you may possess, and however fair a profession you make of religion--that you have not the love of God in you; for how should you have it, when it is not natural to you, and when it has not been implanted in you by an operation above nature? Indeed my friends, if this is your case, you are plainly convicted this day of being destitute of the very first principle of all true religion. Admit the conviction: you may as well expect to be men without being born--as to love God without being born again. But,

2. If you truly love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity--then you frequently and affectionately think of him. This you know is the genius and tendency of love in general--to fix our thoughts upon its object; and the Psalmist often mentions this, as an attendant of his love to God. "How precious are your thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! if I should count them, they are more in number than the sand! When I awake--I am still with you." Psalm 139:17, 18. "I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the night-watches." Psalm 63:6. "My meditation of him shall be sweet." Psalm 104:34. Isaiah represents the whole church as saying, "The desire of our soul is to your name, and to the remembrance of you. My soul yearns for you in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for you." Isaiah 26:8, 9. This you see, is the character of the lovers of God.

And on the other hand, his enemies are characterized as people who do not like to retain him in their knowledge, Romans 1:28, who forget God; Psalm 9:17, and 1:22. "God is not in all your thoughts!" Psalm 10:4. They practically say unto the Almighty, "depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of your ways!" Job 21:14.

The thoughts of an enemy are always ungrateful, especially if he is unable to avenge himself of his adversaries; and the mind will turn every way to avoid them. But thoughts of one we love, how sweet, how welcome, how often do they return! How often does the dear image of an absent friend rise to the mind! and with what affectionate endearments! Unless you are entire strangers to this sincere passion, you know, by experience, this is the nature and tendency of love.

And do not these things enable some of you to give a comfortable answer to this question, "Do you love Me?" You are often jealous of your love; but if you love him not, why do your thoughts make so many eager sallies to him? Once your thoughts could dwell within the compass of created nature, and fly from vanity to vanity, without attempting a flight to heaven. But now do they not often break through the limits of creation, in eager search after God as that supreme good? And with what affectionate eagerness do they at times dwell there? How do your souls delight to survey and gaze at his perfections, and contemplate the wonders of his works! And how often do your thoughts hover round a crucified Jesus, and, as it were, cling and cluster to his cross--like the bees round the hive!

You do not indeed think of him as frequently, or with such affectionate endearments as you should. But can you not appeal to himself, that the thoughts of him are welcome to your minds; that you do at times

dwell with pleasure in the delightful contemplation, even when your hands are busy about other things; and that it is your daily sorrow that your hearts are not more intimate with him, and pay him more frequent visits?

Does not your experience tell you, that you cannot always let your thoughts grovel in the dust, or run out in an endless chase of things below--but that, in some happy hours, they rise on the wings of love, and most affectionately cleave to your dear Redeemer? And your thoughts are not the cold speculations of a philosopher--but the warm, passionate, and heart-affecting thoughts of a Christian. If this is your care, my friends, take courage. You love the Lord Jesus Christ--and you may be sure he loves you, and will treat you as his friends!

But are there not many of you who may be convinced by those things, that you have not the love of God in you? For are you not conscious that your affectionate thoughts are prostituted to some trifle in this fleeting world, and hardly ever aspire to Jesus? Nay, are not the thoughts of God, and divine and eternal things, unwelcome to you? And do you not cast them out of your minds as you would shake a spark of fire from your clothing? Do you not find yourselves shy of him, and alienated from him? Do not those things give you pain which would turn your thoughts towards him? You do not affect such subjects of meditation or conversation, and you soon grow weary and uneasy when your minds are tied down to them. And what can be the cause of this--but a strong disaffection to God, and a secret consciousness that he is your enemy on this account?

O sirs! what can be more astonishing, or what can be a stronger evidence of enmity to God, than that men should live in such a world as this--and yet hardly ever have one affectionate thought of their great Author, Preserver, and Benefactor! His glory shines upon them from all his works, and meets their eye wherever they look! His Word exhibits him to their view in a still more bright and amiable light. It represents the Lord Jesus in all the love and agonies of his crucifixion, and in all the glories of his exaltation! They are receiving mercies from him every moment of their lives; for in him they live, and move, and have their being. Their own reason and consciences tell them that he is the most excellent and lovely being, and worthy of supreme and universal love, and they profess to believe it; and yet he cannot, after all, gain so much as their frequent and affectionate thoughts!

Their thoughts, those cheap and easy things--are ungratefully denied to him, who gave them a power of thinking! Oh what stupid indifference about the supreme good, or rather what prevailing enmity is here! Can you pretend to be lovers of Jesus Christ while this is your case? Can you excuse or extenuate this under the soft name of infirmity? No, it is rank, inveterate, sullen enmity! And the righteous God resents it as such! But,

3. If you love truly God and the Lord Jesus Christ--then you delight in communion with them. Friends, you know, delight to converse together, to unbosom themselves to one another, and to enjoy the freedoms of society. They are fond of interviews, and seize every opportunity for that purpose; and absence is tedious and painful to them. If you are so happy as to have a friend, you know by experience this is the nature of love. Now, though God is a spirit, and infinitely above all sensible converse with the sons of men--yet he does not keep himself at a distance from his people. He has access to their spirits, and allows them to carry on a spiritual communication with him, which is the greatest happiness of their lives. Hence God is so often said, in the Scriptures, to draw near to them, and they to him, James 4:8; Hebrews 7:19; Psalm 69:18; and 73:28; Hebrews 10:22; Lam. 3:57.

And John, speaking of himself and his fellow-Christians, says, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ." 1 John 1:3. This divine fellowship is promised by Jesus Christ to all his friends, John 14:21, 23. "He who loves me--shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him; my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." This mystical fellowship is peculiar to the friends of God--and others know nothing of it. They are represented as rebellious strangers and aliens--who have no communication with God. Ephesians 2:12, Col. 1:21. He is shy of them, and they of him. They keep at a distance from one another like alienated people.

This communion on God's part, consists in his communicating to his people the influences of his grace, to quicken them, to inflame their love, to give them filial boldness in drawing near to him, in assuring them of his love to them, and representing himself to them as reconciled and accessible. And on their part--it consists in a liberty of heart and speech in pouring out their prayers to him, a delightful freedom of spirit in all exercises of devotion, in returning him love for love, and dedicating themselves to him.

Thus there is a kind of interchange of thoughts and affections, mutual freedoms and endearments, between them. And oh! how divinely sweet in some happy hours of sacred intimacy! This indeed is heaven upon earth: and, might it but continue without interruption, the life of a lover of God would be a constant series of pure, unmingled happiness! But, alas! at times their Beloved withdraws himself, and goes from them, and then they languish, and pine away, and mourn, like the mourning turtle-dove that has lost his mate. This fellowship with God may be a strange thing to some of you; and to vindicate the lack of it, you may give it some odious name, such as enthusiasm, fanaticism, or a heated imagination. But I must tell you, if you know nothing of it, your temper and experience is entirely different from all the friends of God, and, therefore, you cannot rank yourselves in that happy number.

Now the ordinances of the gospel are, as it were, the places of interview, where God and his people meet, and where they indulge those sacred freedoms. It is in prayer, in meditation, in reading or hearing his Word, in communion at his table; it is in these and the like exercises that God communicates, and, as it were, unbosoms himself to those who love him; and they enjoy the freedom of children and friends with him: and on this account they delight in those ordinances, and take pleasure in attending upon them. The workings of their hearts in this respect, you may discover in David, when, by the persecution of Saul, or the rebellion of his son Absalom, he was banished from the stated ordinances of public worship, Psalm 62:1, 2, 4, and 84 throughout, and 27:4.

And now, my friends, to come nearer home, have not some of you experienced the sacred joys of communion with God? And were not those the sweetest hours of your life? Have you not found it good for you to draw near to him? And when he has withdrawn his presence--how have you languished and mourned, and could never be easy until he was pleased to return to you? Do you not also find a sacred pleasure in the institutions of the gospel, because there you hope to meet your God, and enjoy communion with him? Is this the principle that prompts you to pray, to hear, and perform every religious duty? Then you may appeal to a heart-searching God, "Lord, you know that I love you!"

But does not this view of the matter give the conscience of some of you reason to condemn you? You have neither known nor desired this fellowship with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ. Alas! you know nothing of those freedoms of divine friendship; and you have no prevailing pleasure in devotion. You either neglect the duties of religion, or else you perform them from custom, education, constraint of conscience, or some other such base principle. Let me point out one instance as a specimen; and that is secret prayer and closet devotion. Nothing can be more expressly commanded than this is by Christ, Matthew 6:6, and

is this your daily practice? Is this the most pleasant exercise of your life? Or is it a mere formality, or a weariness to you? My friends, inquire honestly into this matter!

4. And lastly, If you truly love the Lord Jesus Christ--then you earnestly study and endeavor to please him by a life of universal obedience. Love is always desirous to please the person beloved; and it will naturally lead to a conduct that is pleasing. This, then, you may be sure of, that if you love Jesus--then it is the labor of your life to please him. The grand inquiry with you is not: Will this or that please men? Will it please myself? Or will it promote my interest? But, Will it please my God and Savior? If not--then I will have nothing to do with it! This is the standing rule of your practice. Let others consult their own inclinations, or the taste of the age; let them consult their own secular interest, or the applause of mortals; you consult what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. Romans 12:2. See also Ephesians 6:6; 1 Peter 3:17; Hebrews 13:21; and if you may but please him--it is enough.

But are there not some of you who are hardly ever concerned with this dutiful solicitude? If you can please yourselves, and those whose favor you would court, if you can but promote your own interest--then you are not solicitous whether you please God or not. This proves that you destitute of his love.

The only way to please God, and the best test of your love to Him--is obedience to His commandments. This is made the decisive mark by Christ himself. "If anyone loves Me--he will obey My teaching. He who does not love Me--will not obey My teaching." John 14:23, 24. Jesus repeats this theme over and over in different forms: "Whoever has My commands and obeys them--he is the one who loves Me," verse 21. "If you love Me--you will obey what I command," verse 15. "You are My friends--if you do what I command." John 15:14. "This is love for God," says John; that is, it is the surest evidence, and the natural, inseparable effect of our love to God, "that we obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome." 1 John 5:3; that is, they will not seem grievous to one who obeys them from the sincere principle of love.

Here, then, you who profess to love the Lord Jesus, here is an infallible test for your love! Do you make it the great study of your life to keep his commandments? Do you honestly endeavor to perform every duty he has enjoined, and that because he has commanded it? And do you vigorously resist and struggle against every sin, however constitutional, however fashionable, however gainful--because he forbids it? And is the way of obedience pleasant to you? Would you choose this holy way to heaven rather than any other--if it were left to your choice?

What does conscience answer to this? Do not some of you stumble and hesitate here? If you should speak the truth, you must say, "I cannot but confess that I willfully indulge myself in some things which Jesus has forbidden, and leave unattempted some duties which he has commanded." Alas! is this the case? Then his love does not dwell in you: you are undeniably his enemies, whatever be your pretensions.

But if you can say, "Lord, I own that in many things I offend; and in many things I come short of my duty; but if I know myself, I think I can honestly declare, that it is my sincere and earnest desire to do your will, and that it is my real endeavor in every instance in which it is made known to me;" I say, if you can make this declaration, your case looks encouraging; this is the dutiful temper and modest language of genuine love to God.

And now, my friends, if Jesus should put this question to each of you, "Do you love Me?" are you prepared to answer him? Can you desire more plain or more certain evidences than have been given? Surely, not! And therefore, if you are still quite undetermined, it is owing to the real obscurity and perplexity of your case, or to your carelessness and inattention, or to your willfully shutting your eyes against conviction! My

friends, if you have these characteristics of love to Jesus--then away with your painful doubts, and believe that your hearts are upright before him. But if you are destitute of them, be assured you are equally destitute of his love.

Love can never be separated from its natural fruits and effects; and therefore, without these, it is the greatest absurdity to pretend to it. Can you rise up now, and tell the Lord Jesus to his face, "Lord, it is true, I have not the fruits and evidences of love--but I love you notwithstanding! I love you above all, though I have no frequent affectionate thoughts of you! I love you, though I hate to think of you; though I have no pleasure in conversing with you, nor any concerns to please you, and keep your commandments! That is, I love you, though my temper and conduct towards you be those of an enemy!"

Alas! Sirs, will you presume to impose upon an omniscient God, with such absurd contradictory pretensions as these! Would such a love as this pass current among men? Offer it now to your judge, your father, or your friend--and see if they will accept of it. Tell your friend, "I most sincerely love you, though I dislike to think of you, or converse with you; I love you, though I care not whether I please you!" Would he not discard you from his friendship, as an inconsistent pretender, and highly resent it, that you should think to impose upon him by such absurd pretensions!

And shall that pass for sincere, supreme love to God--which would not be accepted as common friendship among men? Shall enmity, disguised under hypocritical pretensions, be offered to him, under the name of friendship? With horror I mention it! And yet I must mention it, that you may be shocked at your conduct! Do you think that God lacks wisdom--to be thus imposed upon? It is a plain case--you have not the least spark of true love to him! You are enemies to him in your minds, by wicked works--so therefore, pass sentence upon yourselves! "Here is a soul so perverse and wicked, that it has never yet loved its divine Parent and the supreme excellency; it has never loved the blessed Jesus, the Friend of sinners!"

And now, should all the enemies of God in this assembly walk to to the left side, and crowd together by themselves; how thin would the congregation be on the right! How few would be left behind! Well, the day is coming, when you must be separated, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. To the left hand, sinners, to the left hand of your Judge you must go, who continue destitute of his love. Then you will know the truth of your case; but, alas! it will be too late to correct it. But now the discovery of it is the first step towards the amendment of it. And, therefore, let your consciences now anticipate the proceedings of the great judgment day, and draw a line of separation between you, that I may address you according to the classes in which you are found. This leads me, pursuant to my proposed method,

II. To address myself to you who have now discovered that you are sincere lovers of Jesus Christ, notwithstanding your many imperfections. And my time will allow me to offer only two things to you.

1. The one is, your heaven is sure! I repeat it again, your heaven is sure; as sure as the sincerity of your love. Love is the grand qualification for the enjoyment of God. You can be happy in his presence, because you love him; happy in his service, because you love him; happy in the contemplation of his glories, because you love him. In short, love renders you fit for heaven, and all its employments and fruitions, and therefore you shall certainly be admitted there; for God never will exclude one soul that is fit for it, or that could relish the happiness there. Love is the substance of all religion and obedience; love is the fulfilling of the law; and that love you have in your hearts. Oh happy souls, "rejoice in hope of the glory of God:" for, as the apostle reasons, "your hope will not make you ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in your hearts by the Holy Spirit." Romans 5:4, 5. Love is an important principle. Charity, or love, never fails.

1 Corinthians 13. 8: It is, therefore, not only your privilege--but your duty, to rejoice: and how can you refrain, when in a few years, at most, you will be with that Jesus whom you love unseen, in all the glories, and in all the felicities, of the heavenly world.

2. The other thing I would mention to you is, alas! how faint, how imperfect is your love! And what great reason have you to cherish it, and labor to raise it unto a vigorous flame! I need not offer much for your conviction on this head; for, alas! you cannot but be sensible your love bears no suitable proportion to the excellency of the divine nature, the dying love of Jesus, and your obligations to him. Alas! it is but a feeble spark, and sometimes so buried and suffocated under the weight of your corruptions, that you can hardly discern it at all, and fear it is entirely extinguished. Oh then, I beseech you, love your God more: love your dear Redeemer more. Do not affront him with such a languid love: think over his excellences, his relations to you, his unbounded love and grace to you; and these considerations may fire your hearts, cold as they are. Cry to him to kindle the sacred flame in your breasts, and avoid everything that tends to damp it: guard against the friendship of this world, which is enmity against God, and against all the workings of sin: avoid all causes of variance and distance between God and you, and labor to maintain a settled peace and a constant correspondence. But the other class of my hearers stand in greater need of immediate relief, and therefore,

III. I shall address myself to such of you as may have discovered, by this day's trial, that you are destitute of sincere love to Christ, and what I have to say to you, my dear fellow-mortals, may be reduced under two heads:

your sin and danger;

and the most proper means of deliverance.

A. To convince you of your SIN and DANGER in not loving God and his Son Jesus Christ, consider:

1. It is the supreme excellency, whom you have refused to love! The most venerable Majesty, the most consummate wisdom, the most rich goodness and grace, the most amiable justice; these are the things which you dislike and refuse--while you are remain at enmity towards God; for these are his very nature. You neglect and refuse faithfulness, justice, veracity, mercy, benevolence, and every moral beauty in the highest perfection. You are enemies to the origin, and the sum total of all excellency! Now this may strike you with conviction in various views:

How depraved and corrupt must your souls be--which can dislike and refuse such a glorious object! How must your taste be vitiated--which cannot relish the supreme good! You can love the faint shadows of these perfections--in your fellow-creatures: you can love generosity, benevolence, mercy, justice, and such virtues--in mortals. So may you not fall down overwhelmed with astonishment, and cry out, "Lord, what is this that has befallen my soul--that I cannot love you! That I can love anything else that is lovely--and yet cannot love you! Oh! what a perverse, depraved, abominable soul I have!"

Sirs, must you not be shocked, to think that you have such souls within you? If your bodies were all overrun with rotten ulcers; if your facial features were all convulsed and distorted into the most hideous forms; if your limbs were all shattered and dislocated; if your taste were so vitiated that you loathed all healthful food, and you should crawl upon the earth, feeding on its mire and dirt; all this would not render you half so odious and horrible a monster--as a soul hating and refusing God!

Again, what an aggravated wickedness must this be? Your obligations to love him--are just in proportion to his loveliness and excellency; and the wickedness of breaking these obligations is in exact proportion to their strength. And as his excellency and your obligations are infinite--then your wickedness in not loving him must be infinite as well. What illustration shall I use to represent this crime in its proper infernal colors? If you should be an enemy to the whole creation; and hate all men and angels with implacable abhorrence; and detest the father who begat you, and the breasts that gave you suck; nay, if you should commence a direct enemy to yourself--and be perpetually plotting against your own life--all this would not equal the crime of hating the ever-blessed God! For all these beings together, have no excellency when compared to him! And your obligation to love him is prior and fundamental to all others. Here your love should begin, here it should center, and then extend its lines to all parts of the circle of creation. Therefore, no more plead your innocence. If you had never committed one other sin in all your life--this sin of not loving God is sufficient to condemn you forever to the lowest hell.

Further, this sin will appear more aggravated, if you consider, that, by not loving God, you do in the strongest manner declare, that he has none of these excellences--but is a worthless being, undeserving of your love! When you do not love him, after all the discoveries he has made of himself to you, it is plain that this is the habitual sense of your hearts--that he has no excellency worthy of your love! This is the language of your hearts; and this language is much more strong and expressive than that of your lips! You may speak things inadvertently, which your second thoughts would retract; but by being all your life destitute of the love of God, you have all your life been declaring that you look upon him as a worthless being, far inferior to a thousand trifles upon earth, to which you have given your love.

Now you would not dare to utter such blasphemy as this, and how can you dare to declare it, much more strongly, by the temper of your hearts, and stand to it as a truth? Oh! will you never retract it--by becoming a lover of God? My friends, can you imagine a more shocking, insolent wickedness than this? And what a hateful and despicable soul must that be--which has been guilty of it all its days! What is this but to say, with the atheistic fool, "No God for me!" For he is not God, if he is not supremely excellent and amiable. And if you wish there were no God, what do you do but wish universal desolation, and imprecate destruction to yourself and every other being? For were there no God--there could be nothing else; there would not have been one spark of being through infinite space in any point of duration!

2. Your not loving God--is a most UNNATURAL wickedness! He is your Father; and that in a higher sense than your earthly parents can be. He is the author of your BODIES, because it was he who first established, and still continues in force, those laws of generation, by which they were produced. And had it not been for this, men could no more produce one another--than a stone or a clod of earth! As to your SOULS, the nobler part of your persons, they are his immediate offspring, produced by him without the instrumentality of secondary causes, of any pre-existent materials.

Thus he is your Father in the highest sense--and yet you have not loved him! You have not loved him--who gave you the power of love. You have not loved him--from whose creative hands you came a few years ago. What an unnatural wickedness is this!

What were you a hundred years ago? You were nothing! And you would have continued so to all eternity--had he not spoke you into being! And yet you have not sincerely loved him all your life--to this moment. Most astonishing! Must you not tremble at and abominate yourselves as the vilest and most unnatural monsters!

Should the child whom received his being from you in a subordinate sense, the child you dandled upon your knees, and for whom you are now laboriously making provision, should he hate the sight of you, shun your company, and do nothing to please you--how would you take it? Would you not think the unnatural miscreant unworthy of life?

And yet thus you have treated your heavenly Father--to whom you were under much higher and more endearing obligations. You have treated him as only a despised broken thing--in whom you could take no pleasure. And are you pleased with yourselves, notwithstanding? Shall not such a shocking prodigy, at which angels gaze with horror--be struck with horror at itself? Should all the world treat God as you have done, what would be the consequence? Why, there would not be one lover of God to be found among all the numerous race of man! And yet, if you have a right to hate him--they have too. Have you any peculiar indulgence in this case? Can you produce an exemption from that universal law, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength"? You see, then, where your conduct leads--and do you not shudder to think of it? And can you imagine yourselves innocent still? Do you think you have tolerably good hearts after all of this? I am sure your reason, if it is not entirely lost, will not allow you to think so!

3. Your not loving God--is a most UNGRATEFUL wickedness! Think what God has done for you: how many mercies he has given you, as many mercies as moments! Think how many deliverances he has wrought for you! See what a well-furnished world he has formed for your accommodation. Think, oh think, of the love and sufferings of Jesus! See the abasement, the labors, the hardships of his life! See the agonies of his crucifixion! See the crown of thorns, the mangled visage, the disjointed limbs, the flowing blood, the bursting heart, the dying pangs of your blessed Redeemer!

Oh! think upon and view these things, and then say what you think of your enmity against him, after all this? Can ingratitude rise to a higher pitch! Oh! is this your return--for all the kindness of God? for all the love of Jesus!!

There was something very cutting in his question to the Jews, "I have shown you many good works," I have never provoked you by anything but good works; "Which of these works are you stoning Me for?" John 10:32. This may be easily accommodated to you. Many kind actions has he done to you, many grievous sufferings has he undergone for you; and for which of these do you hate him? Oh! must not such an expostulation wound you to the heart, and melt you down at his feet in the deepest repentance! Oh! can you continue enemies to the very cross of Christ! Must not that disarm your resentment, and dissolve your hearts--as hard as they are--into the most tender love?

4. Your not loving God--is a most COMPREHENSIVE wickedness! You are repeatedly told, that love is the fulfilling of the law. Romans 13:8, 10; James 2:8. The first and great commandment upon which the whole law and the prophets depend, is, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength," that is--love is the root, the principle, the substance of all obedience, because it constrains a man to a cheerful observance of every divine precept, and naturally disposes him to a dutiful conduct.

Now, if love is the fulfilling of the whole law--it follows, that the lack of love is the breach of the whole law: it is dashing the two tables of the law in pieces at once! As love is the principle of all obedience; so enmity is the principle of all disobedience! And while this enmity to God reigns in your hearts--it diffuses a deadly poison through everything you do! And hence, you cannot perform one action acceptable to God. All your endeavors are but the treacherous flattery of an enemy, or the forced homage of a rebel obliged to feign

submission.

In short, the lack of love to God is the lack of everything that is morally good! It is the root of all evil! It is a complication of all wickedness! It is a summary, nay, I may say, the sum total of all disobedience and rebellion!

And can you any longer build your hopes on the fewness or smallness of your sins? Alas! while you are possessed of this temper--your hearts are full of every evil. This renders not only your actions, your words, and thoughts of every kind--guilty and vile; but the stated, settled bent and disposition of your minds--are most wicked and abominable. When the omniscient God views you asleep, when all the powers of action are suspended, what can he say of you but this, "Here lies an enemy of God!" And must you not fall on your faces before your injured Sovereign, and cry, "Guilty! Guilty!"

5. Your not loving God--is a most INEXCUSABLE wickedness. Your mouth must be stopped, and you have no plea left to excuse or extenuate it. You cannot plead here, as you do in some other things, "There are so many different opinions about religion--that I know not what to choose!" For here, as I told you, all are agreed. They are all unanimous in this--that love to God is essential to religion. Not only all denominations of Christians--but Jews, Mohammedans, Heathen, and all who believe the existence of a God, confess this. And are you of a religion that does not include the love of God in it? If so--then it is the religion of devils--or rather it is the most diabolical irreligion! I insist the more boldly upon this point, because it is a universal truth, free from all dispute.

You cannot plead that you have no time for the exercise of love to God; for love is not the work of the hands--but of the heart; and may be performed while you are engaged in other business. Can you not think affectionately of a friend behind a counter, or over a plough? So you might love God--and yet follow your daily employments. Nor can you excuse yourselves from your inability; for God has implanted the passion of love in your nature, and you find it easy to love other things: you can love the world, you can love a child or a friend--and why cannot you love God? The act of love is the same in both cases, and one would think it would be an easier thing for you to love him who is the Supreme Excellence, than imperfect creatures, whose excellency is limited, or mingled with many hateful qualities.

Whence then is your inability in this case? It is nothing else but the strength of your enmity; that is, you are so rebellious to the ever-blessed God, that you cannot love him! And does this lessen your crime? Do the inveteracy and rancor of your enmity, excuse it? Alas! that is its most dreadful aggravation! Oh! how wicked must you be--when you are so rebellious to the God who made you, and the Savior who died for you--that you cannot prevail upon your hearts to love him!

Farther, Have you tried what can be done to root out and subdue this enmity--by the power of the Holy Spirit? Have you cried to God in earnest prayer, and used all means for that end? If not--then it is plain you are an enemy to God, and delight to continue so; you hate him, and practically insist upon it, that you do right. Nor can you pretend ignorance in this case; for your own conscience tells you that it is your duty to love God. In short, you are entirely inexcusable; you sin against the full conviction of your own minds--and you must join with God, angels, and men, in your own condemnation!

6. Your not loving God--if it continues, will certainly exclude you from the kingdom of heaven! Alas! what would you do with your wicked hearts in heaven? Heaven would be an enemy's country to you. What pleasure could you have in the society or service of that God whom you hate? What pleasure could you have in those exercises and enjoyments for which you have no relish? Could you be happy in the practice

of eternal flattery, bowing and singing insincere complimentary praises to an enemy? Could you be happy to be an eternal impostor? There is not one impostor like you in all that innumerable assembly: they all love that God whom you hate. And with what pleasure could you mingle among them? How could you live in a country where the laws, the customs, the employments, the disposition of the inhabitants, are all contrary to your temper? Oh! you need no sentence from your Judge to exclude you--you would exclude yourselves, and choose to mingle with your fellow-devils! Which leads me to add,

7. Your not loving God--if it continues, will certainly lead you to hell. You are fit for no other place. Where should the enemies of God be--but in an infernal prison? There is the same propriety in throwing you into hell--as in shutting up madmen in bedlam--or rebels in a dungeon! Why, you are devilized already! You have the very temper of devils! Enmity to God is the grand constituent of a devil--it is the worst ingredient in that infernal disposition; and this you have in your hearts, and, as it were, incorporated with your habitual temper. And what do you think will become of you? Judge yourselves, must you not be doomed to that everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels, whom you resemble?

Here I must add, that if ever you are brought to love God--it must be in this present world. In heaven and hell--no new dispositions are planted; but those which are found prevalent in the soul--will ripen and grow to perfection. None begin to grow wicked in hell--or to love God in heaven! The seeds are all sown in the present state, which then spring up to maturity. Therefore, if you would ever have the love of God shed abroad in your hearts--now, now is the time! Now--or never!

B. "But, what MEANS (you will say) shall I use for this purpose?" Here I must be short; but if you are really in earnest, you will easily understand the shortest hints:

1. Labor to be deeply sensible of the aggravated sinfulness and danger of your present state. Deeply impress your minds with this. Check the levity of your minds--and indulge a serious, anxious, sorrowful temper; for your case really requires it!

2. Be deeply sensible of the necessity of divine grace to change your hearts, and inspire you with divine love. The disease is so far gone--that you cannot heal yourselves! But, blessed be God, he is able, he is able to make such an enemy as you--into his hearty friend and dutiful subject! Therefore,

3. Betake yourselves to earnest prayer; and confess your guilt, your vileness, your liableness to divine displeasure! Cry for his Spirit to shed abroad his love in your hearts! Here let your petitions center; for this is the main thing. Endeavor to devote yourselves to him, to give up your wicked hearts to him, to bow that rebellious soul at his feet.

4. Meditate upon--the glory of God, his kindness to you, the love and sufferings of Christ, and such subjects as tend to beget and inflame your love to him.

5. Do not weary in the use of these means--but persevere, hold on, until you find a thorough change produced in your hearts. Your eternal all is concerned! Therefore be not remiss and careless; be not soon tired or discouraged. Never give up until your last breath; and who knows but that hostile spirit of yours--may soon become the friend of God, and at length shine among his celestial friends in all their transcendent glories, and ineffable and eternal felicity! Amen.

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