

Love the Lord Jesus Christ!

See that you love the Lord Jesus Christ with a superlative love, with an overtopping love. There are none have suffered so much for you as Christ; there are none that can suffer so much for you as Christ. The least measure of that wrath that Christ has sustained for you, would have broke the hearts, necks, and backs of all created beings.

O my friends love him above your lusts, love him above your relations, love him above the world, love him above all your outward contentment and enjoyments; yes, love him above your very lives; for thus the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, saints, primitive Christians, and the martyrs of old, have loved our Lord Jesus Christ with an overtopping love: Rev. 12:11, 'They loved not their lives unto the death;' that is, they slighted, contemned, yes, despised their lives, exposing them to hazard and loss, out of love to the Lamb, 'who had washed them in his blood.'

I have read of one Kilian, a Dutch schoolmaster, who being asked whether he did not love his wife and children, answered, Were all the world a lump of gold, and in my hands to dispose of, I would leave it at my enemies feet to live with them in a prison; but my soul and my Savior are dearer to me than all. If my father, says Jerome, should stand before me, and my mother hang upon, and my brethren should press about me, I would break through my brethren, throw down my father, and tread underfoot my mother, to cleave to Jesus Christ. Had I ten heads, said Henry Voes, they should all be cut off for Christ. If every hair of my head, said John Ardley, martyr, were a man, they should all suffer for the faith of Christ. Let fire, racks, pulleys, said Ignatius, and all the torments of hell come upon me, so I may win Christ. Love made Jerome to say, O my Savior, did you die for love of me?—a love sadder than death; but to me a death more lovely than love itself. I cannot live, love you, and be longer from you. George Carpenter, being asked whether he did not love his wife and children, which stood weeping before him, answered, My wife and children!—my wife and children! are dearer to me than all Bavaria; yet, for the love of Christ, I know them not. That blessed virgin in Basil being condemned for Christianity to the fire, and having her

estate and life offered her if she would worship idols, cried out, 'Let money perish, and life vanish, Christ is better than all.' Sufferings for Christ are the saints' greatest glory; they are those things wherein they have most gloried Your cruelty is our glory, says Tertullian. It is reported of Babylas, that when he was to die for Christ, he desired this favor, that his chains might be buried with him, as the ensigns of his honor. Thus you see with what a superlative love, with what an overtopping love, former saints have loved our Lord Jesus; and can you, Christians, who are cold and low in your love to Christ, read over these instances, and not blush?

-Thomas Brooks

Boasting is Excluded

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

(Romans 3:27)

I have secretly boasted to myself that I was a brave, skilled, confident Christian Sailor while my feet were firmly planted on land; but when at sea, when land was no longer in sight, when the Sun hid his face behind the clouds, when the dark storm surged and the mighty waves swelled, when the lightning flashed and the thunder clapped, when the winds howled and the boat began to rock—then reality slapped me silly, and the heart of the brave, skilled, confident sailor was forced to confess that he sails much better on land than he does at sea.

—Frank Hall

The Cost

“Which of you, intending to build a tower, does not down first sit down and count the cost?” (Luke 14:28).

Let there be no mistake about my meaning. I am not examining what it costs to save a Christian’s soul. I know well that it costs nothing less than the blood of the Son of God to provide an atonement and to redeem man from hell. The price paid for our redemption was nothing less than the death of Jesus Christ on Calvary. We “are bought with a price.” “Christ gave Himself a ransom for all” (1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Tim. 2:6). But all this is wide of the question. The point I want to consider is another one altogether. It is what a man must be ready to give up if he wishes to be saved. It is the amount of sacrifice a man must submit to if he intends to serve Christ. It is in this sense that I raise the question: “What does it cost?” And I believe firmly that it is a most important one.

I grant freely that it costs little to be a mere outward Christian. A man has only got to attend a place of worship twice on Sunday and to be tolerably moral during the week, and he has gone as far as thousands around him ever go in religion. All this is cheap and easy work: it entails no self-denial or self-sacrifice. If this is saving Christianity and will take us to heaven when we die, we must alter the description of the way of life, and write, “Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to heaven!”

But it does cost something to be a real Christian, according to the standard of the Bible. There are enemies to be overcome, battles to be fought, sacrifices to be made, an Egypt to be forsaken, a wilderness to be passed through, a cross to be carried, a race to be run. Conversion is not putting a man in an armchair and taking him easily to heaven. It is the beginning of a mighty conflict, in which it costs much to win the victory. Hence arises the unspeakable importance of “counting the cost.”

1. True Christianity will cost one his self-righteousness. He must cast away all pride and high thoughts and conceit of his own goodness. He must be content to go to heaven as a poor sinner saved only by free grace and owing all to the merit and righteousness of another.

2. True Christianity will cost a man his sins. He must be willing to give up every habit and practice which is wrong in God's sight. He must set his face against it, quarrel with it, break off from it, fight with it, crucify it and labor to keep it under, whatever the world around him may say or think. It is written, "Cast away from you all your transgressions." "Break off your sins . . . and iniquities." "Cease to do evil" (Ezek. 18:31; Dan. 4:27; Isa. 1:16).

3. Also, Christianity will cost a man his love of ease. He must take pains and trouble if he means to run a successful race toward heaven. He must daily watch and stand on his guard, like a soldier on enemy's ground.

4. Lastly, true Christianity will cost a man the favor of the world. He must be content to be thought ill of by man if he pleases God. He must count it no strange thing to be mocked, ridiculed, slandered, persecuted and even hated.

Moreover, I grant it costs much to be a true Christian. But what sane man or woman can doubt that it is worth any cost to have the soul saved? When the ship is in danger of sinking, the crew think nothing of casting overboard the precious cargo. When a limb is mortified, a man will submit to any severe operation, and even to amputation, to save life. Surely a Christian should be willing to give up anything which stands between him and heaven. A religion that costs nothing is worth nothing! A cheap Christianity, without a cross, will prove in the end a useless Christianity, without a crown.

-J.C Ryle

The Sure Foundation of God

Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.
(2 Timothy 2:19)

The professing church may drift into open apostasy, error may be rampant, worldliness may come in like a flood, but in spite of all, and in the midst of all, a sure foundation remains. What a relief for a Christian's heart to apprehend this! What a resting-place for the soul amid the sea of unrest which rolls around us today! It may seem as if all the old landmarks were being rapidly removed, yet an immovable foundation may be found, and happy will be my reader's portion if he is led to that foundation and takes his stand upon it.

Two things characterize the "foundation of God", one of which is brought before us in the words, "The Lord knoweth them that are His". Sovereign grace has secured its objects, and will secure them to the end, in spite of all the evil and departure from truth. They may be – and, alas! often are – hidden to human eyes, but the Lord knows them. Though He can no longer own as His the great profession which bears His name only to dishonor it, in the midst of it all He knows the chosen, called, and justified ones. We may not be able to discriminate between the wheat and the tares, or between the wise and foolish virgins. We may be deceived by the empty and Christless professor, or we may misjudge the truly converted soul, but the Lord makes no mistakes. Grace has chosen her objects, and secured them, and keeps them in spite of men or devils, and "the Lord knoweth them that are His".

I earnestly hope that my reader has the divine assurance on the authority of the word of God, that his sins are forgiven, that he is justified by faith, has peace with God, and has received the Holy Spirit.

But the "foundation of God" has another seal – sometimes overlooked by those who rejoice in the first.

"Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity". In a day like this the only divine path is one of unhesitating obedience to the

word of God. Human reason and natural feeling may suggest innumerable arguments to defer obedience to a word like this. Another course may seem better calculated to attain the end in view. But human expediency and policy are unknown things in the region of faith. Faith's inquiry is, What saith the Scripture? What saith the Lord? Faith hears His voice only to obey it.

-C.A Coates

Feeding Sheep or Amusing Goats?

An evil is in the professed camp of the Lord, so gross in its impudence, that the most shortsighted can hardly fail to notice it during the past few years. It has developed at an abnormal rate, even for evil. It has worked like leaven until the whole lump ferments. The devil has seldom done a cleverer thing than hinting to the church that part of their mission is to provide entertainment for the people, with a view to winning them.

From speaking out as the Puritans did, the church has gradually toned down her testimony, then winked at and excused the frivolities of the day. Then she tolerated them in her borders. Now she has adopted them under the plea of reaching the masses.

My first contention is that providing amusement for the people is nowhere spoken of in the Scriptures as a function of the church. If it is a Christian work, why did not Christ speak of it? "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). That is clear enough. So it would have been if He had added, "and provide amusement for those who do not relish the gospel." No such words, however, are to be found. It did not seem to occur to him.

Then again, "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers . . . for the work of the ministry"

(Eph. 4:11-12). Where do entertainers come in? The Holy Spirit is silent concerning them. Were the prophets persecuted because they amused the people or because they refused? The concert has no martyr roll.

Again, providing amusement is in direct antagonism to the teaching and life of Christ and all his apostles. What was the attitude of the church to the world? Ye are the salt" (Matt. 5:13), not the sugar candy—something the world will spit out not swallow. Short and sharp was the utterance, "Let the dead bury their dead" (Matt. 8:22) He was in awful earnestness.

Had Christ introduced more of the bright and pleasant elements into his mission, he would have been more popular when they went back, because of the searching nature of His teaching. I do not hear him say, "Run after these people Peter and tell them we will have a different style of service tomorrow, something short and attractive with little preaching. We will have a pleasant evening for the people. Tell them they will be sure to enjoy it. Be quick Peter, we must get the people somehow." Jesus pitied sinners, sighed and wept over them, but never sought to amuse them.

In vain will the Epistles be searched to find any trace of this gospel of amusement! Their message is, "Come out, keep out, keep clean out!" Anything approaching fooling is conspicuous by its absence. They had boundless confidence in the gospel and employed no other weapon.

After Peter and John were locked up for preaching, the church had a prayer meeting but they did not pray, "Lord grant unto thy servants that by a wise and discriminating use of innocent recreation we may show these people how happy we are." If they ceased not from preaching Christ, they had not time for arranging entertainments. Scattered by persecution, they went everywhere preaching the gospel. They turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). That is the only difference! Lord, clear the church of all the rot and rubbish the devil has imposed on her, and bring us back to apostolic methods.

Lastly, the mission of amusement fails to effect the end desired. It works havoc among young converts. Let the careless and scoffers, who thank God

because the church met them halfway, speak and testify. Let the heavy laden who found peace through the concert not keep silent! Let the drunkard to whom the dramatic entertainment has been God's link in the chain of the conversion, stand up! There are none to answer. The mission of amusement produces no converts. The need of the hour for today's ministry is believing scholarship joined with earnest spirituality, the one springing from the other as fruit from the root. The need is biblical doctrine, so understood and felt, that it sets men on fire.

-C.H. Spurgeon

One Unmingled Scene of Happiness & Pleasure

"In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." John 14:2

O that we could lift our eyes to those blessed abodes—those mansions of heavenly bliss where no sorrow intrudes, where sin is unknown, where tears are wiped from off all faces, where there is no languishing body, no wasting sickness, no pining soul, no doubt, no fear, no darkness, no distress—but one unmingled scene of happiness and pleasure—and the whole soul and body are engaged in singing the praises of the Lamb! And what crowns the whole—there is the eternal enjoyment of those pleasures which are at the right hand of God forevermore! But how lost are we in the contemplation of these things—and though our imagination may seem to stretch itself beyond the utmost conception of the mind, into the countless ages of a never ending eternity, yet are we baffled with the thought—though faith embraces the blessed truth. But in that happy land, the immortal soul and the immortal body will combine their powers and faculties to enjoy to the uttermost all that God has prepared for those who love Him.

No God At All

The “god” of this century no more resembles the Supreme Sovereign Holy Writ than does the dim flickering of a candle the glory of the midday sun. The god who is now talked about in the average pulpit, spoken of in the ordinary Sunday School, mentioned in most of the religious literature of the day, and preached in most of the so-called Bible conferences is the figment of human imagination, an invention of overemotional sentimentality. The heathen outside the pale of Christendom form gods out of wood and stone while the millions of heathen inside Christendom manufacture a god out of their own carnal minds. In reality, they are but atheists; for there is no other possible alternative between an absolute supreme God and no God at all! A “god” whose will is resisted, whose designs are frustrated, whose purpose is checkmated possesses no title to Deity, and so far from being a fit object of worship, merits naught but contempt!

-A.W Pink

He Must Increase and I Must Decrease

As the years pass, I come to a greater and greater realization of how much I must depend upon the grace of God for my salvation. My righteousness appears less and less acceptable in my sight: and if it looks poor in my sight, how awful it must appear in God’s sight! My will and determination do not appear half so strong as they once did, and I feel a greater need to rely upon the unchangeable will of God if I am to persevere. This business of growing in grace is not at all what I once thought it would be. Rather than growing stronger, it seems I am growing weaker. Rather than growing more self-sufficient, it appears that I am growing more Christ – dependent. My utter dependence on Christ for all things is more evident to me now than before. I

suppose this is why Peter united growing in grace with growing in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. So, if your desire is to grow in grace, then prepare yourself to diminish; prepare yourself to reduce in the flesh, for growth in grace is a growth in "Christ being formed in you," which always follows the old pattern "He must increase, I must decrease."

-Joe Terrell

Grace and Mercy

First, By this word grace, we are to understand God's free, sovereign, good pleasure, whereby he acteth in Christ towards his people. Grace and mercy therefore are terms that have their distinct significations; mercy signifies pitifulness, or a running over of infinite bowels to objects in a miserable and helpless condition. But grace signifies that God still acts in this as a free agent, not being wrought upon by the misery of the creature, as a procuring cause; but of his own princely mind.

Were there no objects of pity among those that in the old world perished by the flood, or that in Sodom were burned with fire from heaven? doubtless, according to our apprehension, there were many: but Noah, and he only, found grace in God's eyes; not because that of himself he was better than the rest, but God acted as a gracious prince towards him, savory, significant, and suitable, that this form of speaking is become famous among Christians, and will be used to the end of time and let him share in mercy of his own sovereign will and pleasure.

-John Bunyan

Help From The Sanctuary

“May the Lord answer you in the day of trouble. May the name of the God of Jacob set you up on high, send you help from the sanctuary, grant you support from Zion.” Psalm 20:1, 2

When the soul has to pass through the trying hour of temptation, it needs help from the sanctuary. All other help leaves the soul just where it found it. Help is sent from the sanctuary because his name has been from all eternity, registered in the Lamb’s book of life—engraved upon the palms of His hands—borne on His shoulder—and worn on His heart. Communications of life and grace from the sanctuary produce spirituality and heavenly-mindedness. The breath of heaven in his soul draws his affections upward—weans him from earth—and makes him a pilgrim and a sojourner here below, looking for a city with eternal foundations—a city designed and built by God!

-J.C Philpot