

Love's Crowning Deed

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon passionately expounds that the ultimate demonstration of love is laying down one's life for friends, exemplified supremely in Christ's sacrificial death on the Cross.

Scripture: John 15:13, Job 2:4, Romans 8:32, Luke 9:58, Hebrews 2:14, 1 John 3:16, John 10:11

Topics: "Divine Love", "Sacrificial Death", "Christ's Atonement"

Description

In this powerful devotional sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the profound depths of divine love, focusing on the ultimate sacrifice of laying down one's life for friends as exemplified by Jesus Christ. Spurgeon invites believers to dwell in the 'native air' of Christ's love, encouraging a renewed passion and self-denial inspired by the Cross. Through vivid imagery and biblical insight, he reveals the incomparable magnitude of Christ's sacrificial death and its eternal significance for the Christian life.

Transcript

BY C. H. SPURGEON,

"Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13.

I HAVE lately in my ministry very much detained you in the balmy region of Divine lovingkindness. Our subjects have frequently been full of love. I have, perhaps, repeated myself, and gone over the same ground again and again, but I could not help it. My own soul was in a grateful condition and therefore out of the abundance of the heart the mouth has spoken. Truly I have little reason to excuse myself, for the region of love to Christ is the native place of the Christian. We were first brought to know Christ and to rest in Him through His love, and there, in the warmth of His tenderness, we were born to God. Not by the terrors of justice, nor the threats of vengeance were we reconciled, but Divine Grace drew us with cords of love.

Now, we have sometimes heard of sickly persons, that the physician has recommended them to try their native air, in hopes of restoration. So we, also, recommend every backsliding Christian to try the native air of Christ's love and we charge every healthy Believer to abide in it. Let the Believer under decays of Grace go back to the Cross—there he found his hope, there he must find it again. There his love to Jesus began—we, "love Him because He first loved us"—and there must His love be again inflamed. The atmosphere around the Cross of Christ is bracing to the soul. Get to think much of His love and you grow strong and vigorous in Grace.

As the dwellers in the low-lying Alpine valleys become weak and full of disease in the close, damp atmosphere, but soon recover health and strength if they climb the hillside and tarry there, so in this world of selfishness, where every man is fighting for his own and the mean spirit of caring only for one's own self reigns predominant, the saints become weak and diseased, even as worldlings are. But up on the hillsides, where we learn Christ's self-denying, disinterested affection to the sons of men, we are braced to nobler and better lives. If men are ever to be truly great they must be nurtured beneath the wing of Free Grace and dying love.

The grandeur of the Redeemer's example suggests to His disciples to make their own lives sublime, and both furnishes them with motives for doing so and with forces to constrain them thereto. Moreover, we may well tarry for many a day in the region of the love of Christ because not only is it our native region and full of bracing influences, but it has an outlook towards the better shore. As shipwrecked mariners upon a desert island have been known to linger most of the day upon that headland which pushes farthest out into the main ocean, in the hope that, perhaps, if they cannot catch a glimpse of their own country across the waves, they may possibly discern a sail which had left one of the ports of the well-beloved land, so it is that while we are sitting on the headlands of Divine Love we may look across to Heaven and become familiar with the spirits of the just.

If ever we are to see Heaven while we are yet tarrying here, it must surely be from Cape Cross or Mount Fellowship—from that jutting piece of holy experience of Divine Love which runs away from the ordinary thoughts of men and approaches the heart of Christ. There, at any rate, do I long to sit for many an hour till the eternal day shall break and the shadows flee away. And I shall dwell with all the chosen in the land where there is no more sin—for if there can be found a Heaven below, it is where Heaven came down from Heaven to die for sinful men, that sinful men might go up to Heaven to live eternally.

Our subject this morning, then, is Divine Love, and we have chosen the highest hill in all the goodly land for you to climb. We shall take you, today, to Love's most sacred shrine, to the Jerusalem of the holy land of Love, to the labor of Love where it was transfigured, and put on its most beautiful garments. Where it became, indeed, too bright for mortal eye fully to gaze upon it, too lustrous for this dim vision of ours. Let us come to Calvary where we find Love stronger than death, conquering the grave for our sakes!

We shall speak, first, upon Love's crowning act—"Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." But, then, since the text, grand as it is, and high, so that we cannot attain unto it, yet seems to fall short of the great argument—though it is one of the Master's own sayings—we shall speak upon the sevenfold crown of Jesus' Love. And when we have done so, we shall have some royal things to say which befit the place whereon we stand when we are gathered at the foot of the Cross.

I. First, then, LOVE'S CROWNING DEED. There is a climax to everything and the climax of love is to die for a beloved one. "Free Grace and dying love" are the noblest themes among men and when united they are sublimity itself. Love can do much, can do infinite things, but greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. This is the ultima thule of love—its sails can find no further shore, its deeds of self-denial can go no further. To lay down one's life is the most that love can do. This is clear if we consider, first, that when a man dies for his friends, it proves his deep sincerity. Lip-love, proverbially, is a thing to be questioned—too often is it a counterfeit. Love which speaks can use hyperbolical expressions at its will, and when you have heard all you can hear of love's speech, you are not sure that it is love, for all are not hunters that blow the horn, all are not friends who cry up friendship.

There is much among men of a feeling which bears all the likeness of that priceless thing called love, which is more precious than the gold of Ophir, and yet for all that, as all is not gold that glitters, so it is not all love that walks delicately and feigns affection. But a man is no liar when he is willing to die to prove his love. All suspicion of insincerity must then be banished. We are sure he loves who dies for love. Yes, it is not bare sincerity that we see in such a case—we see the intensity of his affection.

A man may make us feel that he is intensely in earnest when he speaks with burning words and he may perform many actions which may all appear to show how intense he is, and yet for all that, he may but be a skillful player, understanding well the art of simulating that which he does not feel. But when a man dies for the cause he has espoused, you know that his is no superficial passion! You are sure that the core of his nature must be on fire when his love consumes his life. If he will shed his blood for the object loved—there must be blood in the veins of his love—it is a living love. Who can question the solemn vehemence of a man's love when he passes through the sepulcher and yields his soul up for the thing he professes to love? So that "greater love has no man than this," because he can give no greater proof of the sincerity and intensity of his affection than to lay down his life for his friends.

And, again, it proves the thorough self-abnegation of the heart when the man risks life, itself, for love. Love and self-denial for the object loved go hand-in-hand. If I profess to love a certain person and yet will neither give my silver nor my gold to relieve his needs, nor in any way deny myself comfort or ease for his sake, such love is contemptible. It wears the name, but lacks the reality of love—true love must be measured by the degree to which the person loving will be willing to subject himself to crosses and losses—to suffering and self-denials. After all, the value of a thing in the market is what a man will give for it, and you must estimate the value of a man's love by that which he is willing to give up for it. What will he do to prove his affection? What will he suffer for the sake of benefiting his beloved? Greater love for friends has no man than this, that he lay down his life for them.

Even Satan acknowledged the reality of the virtue which would lead a man to die, when he spoke concerning Job to God. He made little of Job's losing his sheep, and his cattle, and his children and remaining patient. But he said, "Skin for skin; yes all that a man has will he give for his life; but put forth now Your hand, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse You to Your face." So if love could give up its cattle and its land, its outward treasures and possessions, it would be somewhat strong, but comparatively it would fail if it could not go further and endure personal suffering. Yes, and the laying down of life, itself.

No such failure occurred in the Redeemer's love. Our Savior stripped Himself of all His glories and by a thousand self-denials proved His love. But the most convincing evidence was given when He gave up His life for us. "Hereby perceive we the love of God," says the Apostle John, "because He laid down His life for us." As if John passed by everything else which the Son of God had done for us and put his finger upon His death and said, "Hereby we perceive the love of God towards us." It was majestic love that made the Lord Jesus lay aside, "His attire and rings of light," and lend their glory to the stars. He stripped off His azure mantle and hung it on the sky and then come down to earth to wear the poor, mean garments of our flesh and blood—in which to toil and labor like ourselves. But the masterpiece of love was when He would even put off the garment of His flesh and yield Himself to the superlative agonies of death by crucifixion!

He could go no further. Self-abnegation had achieved its utmost. He could deny Himself no more when He denied Himself leave to live.

Again, Beloved, the reason why death for its object is the crowning deed of love is this, that it excels all other deeds. Jesus Christ had proven His love by dwelling among His people as their Brother, and participating in their poverty as their Friend, till He could say, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay My head." He had manifested His love by telling them all He knew of the Father, unveiling the secrets of eternity to simple fishermen. He showed His love by the patience with which He bore with their faults, never harshly rebuking, but only gently chiding them—and even that but seldom. He revealed His love to them by the miracles He worked on their behalf and the honor which He put upon them by using them in His service. Indeed, there were ten thousand princely acts of the love of Jesus Christ towards His own, but none of them can, for a moment, endure comparison with His dying for them—the agonizing death of the Cross surpasses all the rest!

These life-actions of His love are bright as stars, and, like the stars, if you gaze upon them, they will be seen to be far greater than you dreamed, but yet they are only stars compared with this clear, blazing sun of Infinite Love which is to be seen in the Lord's dying for His people on the bloody tree. Then, I must add that His death did, in effect, comprehend all other acts, for when a man lays down his life for his friend he has laid down everything else. Give up life, and you have given up wealth—where is the wealth of a dead man? Renounce life and you have relinquished position—where is the rank of a man who lies in the sepulcher? Lay down life and you have forsaken enjoyment—what enjoyment can there be to the denizen of the morgue? Giving up life, you have given up all things, therefore the force of that reasoning, "He that spared not His own Son but freely delivered Him up for us all, how will He not with Him also freely give us all things?"

The giving of the life of His dear Son was the giving of all that His Son was. And as Christ is Infinite, and All in All, the delivering up of His life was the concession of All in All to us—there could be nothing more. Beloved, I speak but too coldly upon a theme which ought to stir my soul, first, and yours afterwards. Spirit of the living God, come like a quickening wind from Heaven and let the sparks of our love glow into a mighty furnace just now, even now, if it may so please You! Beloved, we now remark that for a man to die for his friends is evidently the grandest of all proofs of his love in itself. The words glide over my tongue and drop from my lips very readily—"lay down his life for his friends," but do you know or feel what the words mean?

To die for another! There are some who will not even give of their substance to the poor. It seems like wrenching away a limb for them to give a trifle to God's poor servants. Such people cannot guess what it must be to have love enough to die for another, any more than a blind man can imagine what colors can be like—such persons are out of court altogether. There have been loving spirits who have denied themselves comfort and ease, and even common necessities, for the sake of their fellow men. Only such as these are in a measure qualified to form an idea of what it must be to die for another. But still, none of us can fully know what it means. To die for another! Conceive it! Concentrate your thoughts upon it! We start back from death, for under any light in which you may place it, human nature can never regard death as otherwise than a terrible thing.

To pass away into the Glory-land is so bright a hope that death is swallowed up in the victory, but the death itself is a bitter thing, and therefore needs to be swallowed up in the victory before we can bear it. It is a bitter pill and must be drowned in a sweet potion before we can rejoice in it. I am certain that no person, apart from sweet reflections of the Presence of God and the heavenly future, could regard death other than as a dreadful calamity. Even our Savior did not regard His approaching death without trembling! The thought of dying was not, in itself, otherwise than saddening, even to Him. Witness the bloody sweat

as it streamed from Him in Gethsemane, and that man-like putting away of the cup with, "If it is possible let this cup pass from Me"!

As you think of that soul-conflict let it increase your idea of the God-like Love which took the cup resolutely, with both its hands, and drank right on, and never stayed its dreadful draught till the Lord had drank damnation dry for all His people, swallowing up their deaths in His own most comprehensive death! It is no light thing to die. We speak too flippantly of death, but dying is no child's-play to any man—and dying as the Savior died—in awful agonies of body and tortures of soul, it was a great thing, indeed, for His love to do. You may surround death, if you please, with luxury. You may place at the bedside all the dear assuagements of the most tender love. You may alleviate pain by the art of the

apothecary and the physician. And you may decorate the dying couch with the honor of a nation's anxious care—but death, for all that, is, in itself, no slight thing—and when borne for others it is the masterpiece of Love.

And so, closing this point of Love's crowning action, let me say that after a man has died for another, there can be no question raised about his love. Unbelief would be insane if it should venture to intrude itself at the foot of the Cross, though, alas, it has been there and has there proved its utter unreasonableness! If a man dies for his friend, he must love him, nobody can question that! And Jesus, dying for His people, must love them—who shall cast a doubt upon that fact? Shame on any of God's children that they should ever raise questions on a matter so conclusively proven! As if the Lord Jesus knew that even this masterpiece of Love might still be intruded upon by unbelief, He rose again from the dead and rose with His love as fresh as ever in His heart—and went to Heaven leading captivity captive—His eyes flashing with the eternal Love that brought Him down!

He passed through the pearly gates and rode in triumph up to His Great Father's Throne, and though He looked upon His Father with Love ineffable and eternal, He gazed upon His people, too, for His heart was still theirs. Even at this hour, from His Throne among the seraphim, where He sits in Glory, He looks down upon His people with pitying love and condescending Grace—

"Now, though He reigns exalted high, His love is still as great.

Well He remembers Calvary, Nor let His saints forget."

He is all Love and altogether Love. "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

II. THE SEVEN CROWNS OF JESUS' DYING LOVE are our second point. I hope I shall have your interested

attention while I show that above that highest act of human love there is a something in Christ's death for love's sake still more elevated. Men's dying for their friends—this is superlative—but Christ's dying for us is as much above man's superlative as that could be above mere commonplace. Let me show you this in seven points. The first is this—Jesus is immortal, therefore the special character of His death.

Damon is willing to die for Pythias. The classic story shows that each of the two friends was anxious to die for the other. But suppose Damon dies for Pythias, he is only antedating what must occur, for Damon must die one day and if he lays down his life for his friend, say ten years before he otherwise would have done so, still he only loses that ten years' life—he must die sooner or later. Or if Pythias dies and Damon

escapes, it may be that only by a few weeks one of them has anticipated the departure, for they must both die eventually. When a man lays down his life for his friend, he does not lay down what he could keep altogether. He could only have kept it for a while. Even if he had lived as long as mortals can, till gray hairs are on their head, he must, at last, have yielded to the arrows of Death.

A substitutionary death for love's sake in ordinary cases would be but a slightly premature payment of that debt of Nature which must be paid by all. But such is not the case with Jesus. Jesus needed not die at all! There was no ground or reason why He should die apart from His laying down His life in the place of His friends. Up there in Glory was the Christ of God forever with the Father, eternal and everlasting. No age passed over His brow. We may say of Him, "Your locks are bushy and black as the raven, You have the dew of Your youth." He came to earth and assumed our Nature that He might be capable of death, yet remember, though capable of death, His body need not have died. As it was it never saw corruption, because there was not in it the element of sin which necessitated death and decay.

Our Lord Jesus, and none but He, could stand at the brink of the grave and say, "No man takes My life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again." We poor mortal men have only power to die, but Christ had power to live! Crown Him, then! Set a new crown upon His beloved head! Let other lovers who have died for their friends be crowned with silver, but for Jesus, bring forth the golden diadem and set it upon the head of the Immortal who never needed to have died, and yet became a mortal, yielding Himself to death's pangs without necessity, except the necessity of His mighty love!

Note, next, that in the cases of persons who have yielded up their lives for others they may have entertained and probably did entertain the prospect that the supreme penalty would not have been enacted from them. They hoped that they might yet escape. Damon stood before Dionysius, the tyrant, willing to be slain instead of Pythias. But you will remember that the tyrant was so struck with the devotion of the two friends that he did not put either of them to death and so the proffered substitute escaped. There is an old story of a pious miner who was in the pit with an ungodly man at

work. They had lighted the fuse and were about to blast a piece of rock with the powder, and it was necessary that they should both leave the mine before the powder exploded.

They both got into the bucket, but the hand above which was to wind them up was not strong enough to draw the two together, and the pious miner, leaping from the bucket, said to his friend, "You are an unconverted man, and if you die your soul will be lost. Get up in the bucket as quickly as you can! As for me, I commit my soul into the hands of God, and if I die I am saved." This lover of his neighbor's soul was spared, for he was found in perfect safety arched over by the fragments which had been blown from the rock—he escaped. But remember well that such a thing could not occur in the case of our dear Redeemer. He knew that if He was to give a ransom for our souls He had no loophole for escape. He must surely die. It was either He die, or His people must—there was no other alternative. If we were to escape from the pit through Him, He must perish in the pit Himself. There was no hope for Him. There was no way by which the cup could pass from Him.

Men have bravely risked their lives for their friends. Perhaps had they been certain that the risk would have ended in death they would have hesitated. Jesus was certain that our salvation involved death to Him—the cup must be drained to the bottom—He must endure the mortal agony and in all the extreme sufferings of death He must not be spared one jot or tittle. Yet deliberately, for our sakes, He espoused

Death that He might espouse us. I say again, bring forth another diadem! Put a second crown upon that once thorn-crowned head! All hail, Immanuel! Monarch of Misery, and Lord of Love! Was ever love like Yours? Lift up His praises, all you sons of song! Exalt Him, all you heavenly ones! Yes, set His throne higher than the stars! And let Him be extolled above the angels, because with full intent He bowed His head to Death. He knew that it behooved Him to suffer, it behooved that He should be made a Sacrifice for sin, and yet for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame.

Note a third grand excellency in the crowning deed of Jesus' love, namely, that He could have had no motive in that death but one of pure, unmingled love and pity. You remember when the Russian nobleman was crossing the steppes of that vast country in the snow, the wolves followed the sledge in greedy packs, eager to devour the travelers. The horses were lashed to their utmost speed, but needed not the lash, for they fled for their lives from their howling pursuers. Whatever could stay the eager wolves for a time was thrown to them in vain. A horse was loosed—they pursued it, tore it to pieces, and still followed, like grim Death.

At last a devoted servant, who had long lived with his master's family, said, "There remains but one hope for you. I will throw myself to the wolves and then you will have time to escape." There was great love in this, but doubtless it was mingled with a habit of obedience, a sense of reverence to the head of the household, and probably emotions of gratitude for many obligations which had been received through a long course of years. I do not depreciate the sacrifice, far from it. Would that there were more of such a noble spirit among the sons of men! But still, you can see a wide difference between that noble sacrifice and the nobler deed of Jesus laying down His life for those who never obliged Him, never served Him—who were infinitely His inferiors and who could have no claims upon His gratitude.

If I had seen the nobleman surrender himself to the wolves to save his servant, and if that servant had in former days tried to be an assassin and had sought his life—and yet the master had given himself up for the undeserving menial—I could see some parallel. But as the case stands, there is a wide distinction. Jesus had no motive in His heart but that He loved us, loved us with all the greatness of His glorious Nature—loved us, and therefore for love, pure love, and love alone—He gave Himself up to bleed and die—

"With all His sufferings full in view And woes to us unknown, Forth to the tack His spirit flew, 'Twas love that urged Him on."

Put the third crown upon His glorious head! Oh angels, bring forth the immortal coronet which has been stored up for ages for Him alone, and let it glitter upon that ever-blessed brow!

Fourthly, remember, as I have already begun to hint, that in our Savior's case it was not precisely, though it was, in a sense, death for His friends. Greater love has no man than this towards his friends that he lay down his life for them. Read the text so, and it expresses a great truth—but greater love a man may have than to lay down his life for his friends, namely—if he dies for his enemies! And here is the greatness of Jesus' love, that though He called us "friends," the friendship was all on His side at the first. He called us friends, but our hearts called Him enemy, for we were opposed to

Him. We loved not in return for His love. "We hid, as it were, our faces from Him, He was despised, and we esteemed Him not." Oh the enmity of the human heart to Jesus! There is nothing like it! Of all enmities that have ever come from the Pit that is bottomless, the enmity of the heart to the Christ of God is the strangest and most bitter of all!

And yet for men polluted and depraved, for men hardened till their hearts are like the nether millstone, for men who could not return and could not reciprocate the love He felt, Jesus Christ gave Himself to die! "Scarcely for a righteous man one will die, yet perhaps for a good (benevolent) man one could even dare to die, but God commends His love to us in that while we were yet sinners in due time Christ died for the ungodly."—

"O love of unexampled kind! That leaves all thought so far behind; Where length, and breadth, and depth, and height, Are lost to my astonished sight." Bring forth the royal diadem again, I say, and crown our loving Lord, the Lord of Love, for as He is King of kings everywhere else, so is He King of kings in the region of affection!

I shall not, I hope, weary you when I now observe that there was another glorious point about Christ's dying for us for we had, ourselves, been the cause of the difficulty which required a death. There were two brothers on board a raft once, upon which they had escaped from a foundering ship. There was not enough food, and it was proposed to reduce the number that some, at least, might be able to live. So many must die. They cast lots for life and death. One of the brothers was drawn and was doomed to be thrown into the sea. His brother interposed and said, "You have a wife and children at home. I am single and therefore can be better spared. I will die instead of you." "No," said his brother, "not so. Why should you? The lot has fallen upon me." And they struggled with each other in mutual arguments of love, till at last the substitute was thrown into the sea.

Now, there was no ground of difference between those two brothers whatever. They were friends and more than friends. They had not caused the difficulty which required the sacrifice of one of them. They could not blame one another for forcing upon them the dreadful alternative. But in our case there would never have been a need for anyone to die if we had not been the offenders, the willful offenders. And who was the offended one? Whose injured honor required the death? I speak not untruthfully if I say it was the Christ that died who was, Himself, the offended One. Against God the sin had been committed, against the majesty of the Divine Ruler! And in order to wipe the stain away from Divine Justice it was imperative that the penalty should be exacted and the sinful one should die. So He who was offended took the place of the offender and died, that the debt due to His own Justice might be paid. It is the case of the judge bearing the penalty which he feels compelled to pronounce upon the culprit!

Like the old classic story of the father who, on the judgment bench, condemns his son to lose his eyes for an act of adultery, and then puts out one of his own eyes to save an eye for his son—the judge himself bore a portion of the penalty. In our case, He who vindicated the honor of His own Law, and bore all the penalty, was the Christ who loved those who had offended His Sovereignty and grieved His holiness! I say again—but where are the lips that shall say it aright?—Bring forth, bring forth a new diadem of more than imperial splendor, to crown the Redeemer's blessed head anew, and let all the harps of Heaven pour forth the richest music in praise of His supreme love!

Note, again, that there have been men who died for others, but they have never borne the sins of others. They were willing to take the punishment, but not the guilt. Those cases which I have already mentioned did not involve character. Pythias has offended Dionysius, Damon is ready to die for him, but Damon does not bear the offense given by Pythias. A brother is thrown into the sea for a brother, but there is no fault in the case. The servant dies for his master in Russia, but the servant's character rises—it is in no degree associated with any fault of the master—and the master is, indeed, faultless in the case. But here, before Christ must die, it must be written, "He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of

many." "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "He made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." "He was made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree."

Now, far be it from our hearts to say that Christ was ever less than perfectly holy and spotless, and yet there had to be established a connection between Him and sinners by the way of substitution, which must have been hard for His perfect Nature to endure. For Him to be hung up between two felons. For Him to be accused of blasphemy. For Him to be numbered with transgressors. For Him to suffer, the Just for the unjust, bearing His Father's wrath as if He had been

guilty—this is amazing and surpasses all thought! Bring forth the brightest crowns and put them on His head, while we pass on to weave a seventh chaplet for that adorable brow! For remember, once more, the death of Christ was a proof of superlative love, because in His case He was denied all the helps and alleviations which in other cases make death to be less than death.

I marvel not that a saint can die joyously. Well may his brow be placid and his eyes bright, for he sees his heavenly Father gazing down upon him and Glory awaiting him! Well may his spirit be rapt in joy, even while the death-sweat is on his face, for the angels have come to meet him and he sees the far-off land, and the gates of pearl growing nearer every hour! But ah, to die upon a Cross without a pitying eye upon you, surrounded by a scoffing multitude—and to die there appealing to God, who turns away His face! To die with this as your requiem, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me!" To startle the midnight darkness with an, "Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani" of awful anguish such as never had been heard before—this is terrible!

The triumph of Love in the death of Jesus rises clear above all other heroic acts of self-sacrifice! Even as we have seen the lone peak of the monarch of mountains rise out from all adjoining alps and pierce the clouds to hold familiar converse with the stars, so does this love of Christ soar far above anything else in human history, or that can be conceived by the heart of man! His death was more terrible, His passing away more grievous by far. Greater love has no man than this, that He lay down such a life in such a fashion, and for such enemies so utterly unworthy! Oh, I will not say, Crown Him—what are crowns to Him? Blessed Lamb of God, our hearts love You! We fall at Your feet in adoring reverence, and magnify You in the silence of our souls.

III. Lastly, and I must be very brief, as my time has fled, MANY ROYAL THINGS OUGHT TO BE SUGGESTED

TO US BY THIS ROYAL LOVE. And first, dear Brothers and Sisters, how this thought of Christ's proving His love by His death ennobles self-denial. I do not know how you feel, but I feel utterly mean when I think of what Christ has done for me. To live a life of comparative ease and enjoyment shames me. To work to weariness seems nothing. After all, what are we doing compared with what He has done? Those who can suffer, who can lay down their lives in mission fields and bear hardships, and poverty, and persecution for Christ—my Brethren, these are to be envied—they have a portion above their Brethren!

It makes us feel ashamed to be at home and to possess any comforts when JESUS so denied Himself. I say the thought of the Lord's bleeding love makes us think ourselves mean to be what we are. It makes us nothing in our own sight, while it causes us to honor before God the self-denial of others and wish that we had the means of practicing it. And oh, how it prompts us to heroism! When you get to the Cross you have left the realm of little men—you have reached the nursery of true chivalry. Does Christ die?—then we feel

we could die, too! What grand things men have done when they have lived in the love of Christ! That story of the Moravians comes to my mind, and I will repeat it, though you may often have heard it, how in the South of Africa there was, years ago, a place of lepers into which persons afflicted with leprosy were driven.

There was a tract of country surrounded by high walls, from which none could escape. There was only one gate and he who went in never came out again. Certain Moravians looked over the wall and saw two men—one, whose arms had rotted off with leprosy, was carrying on his back another who had lost his legs—and between the two they were making holes in the ground and planting seeds. The two Moravians thought, "They are dying of a foul disease by hundreds inside that place. We will go and preach the Gospel to them. But," they said, "if we go in, we can never come out again. There we will die of leprosy, too." They went in and they never did come out till they went home to Heaven. They died for others for the love of Jesus.

Two others of these holy men went to the West Indian Islands, where there was an estate to which a man could not go to preach the Gospel unless he was a slave. And these two men sold themselves for slaves, to work as others worked, that they might tell their fellow slaves the Gospel. Oh, if we had that spirit of Jesus among us we should do great things! We need it bad, and must have it. The Church has lost everything when she has lost her old heroism! She has lost her power to conquer the world when the love of Christ no longer constrains her. But mark how the heroics in this case is sweetly tintured and flavored with gentleness. The chivalry of the olden times was cruel. It consisted very much in a strong fellow cased in steel going about and knocking others to pieces who did not happen to wear similar suits of steel.

Nowadays we could get a good deal of that courage back, I dare say, but we shall be best without it. We need that blessed chivalry of love in which a man feels, "I would suffer any insult from that man if I could do him good for Christ's sake. And I would be a doormat to my Lord's temple gate, that all who come by might wipe their feet upon me, if they could thereby honor Christ." The grand heroism of being nothing for Christ's sake, or anything for the Church's sake—that is the heroism of the Cross, for Christ made Himself of no reputation and took upon Himself the form of a Servant, and being found in fashion as a Man, He became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. O blessed Spirit, teach us to perform heroic acts of self-abnegation for Jesus' name's sake!

And, lastly, there seems to come to my ears from the Cross a gentle voice that says, "Sinner, Sinner, guilty Sinner, I did all this for you, what have you done for Me?" And yet another which says, "Return unto Me! Look unto Me and be you saved, all you ends of the earth." I wish I knew how to preach to you Christ Crucified. I feel ashamed of myself that I cannot do better than I have done. I pray the Lord to set it before you in a far better way than any of my words can. But, oh, guilty Sinner, there is life in a look at the Redeemer! Turn, now, your eyes to Him and trust Him! Simply by trusting Him you shall find pardon, mercy, eternal life and Heaven. Faith is a look at the Great Substitute. God help you to get that look for Jesus' sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—John 15.

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