

Faith in Its Relations to the Love of God

by Charles Finney

The sermon emphasizes the nature of God's love and the importance of faith in understanding and depending on that love.

Scripture: John 3:16, Romans 5:8, Ephesians 2:4

Topics: "God's Love", "Faith and Dependence"

Description

Charles Finney emphasizes the profound nature of God's love for humanity as expressed in John 3:16, illustrating that this love is not based on human merit but is a disinterested benevolence aimed at promoting the highest good of all. He explains that true faith involves recognizing our dependence on Christ, understanding our moral state, and realizing God's personal love for each individual. Finney argues that this love is impartial, holy, and just, and it compels believers to trust in Christ for salvation and transformation. He warns against self-righteousness and encourages a deep realization of God's love to foster genuine faith and repentance.

Transcript

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." --John 3:16

By the "world" in this passage is meant the human race. The passage affirms God's love for the whole human family.

The word "perish" does not mean annihilation, nor does the word "life" denote mere existence. It is plain that here, as often elsewhere, these terms are contrasted, so that if "life" meant mere existence, "perish" might, by the force of the antithesis, denote non-existence. But neither of these words can have these sense in the text. In fact, the words perish, destruction, &c., do not primarily denote annihilation, but only a change in the mode of existence. It is one of the greatest errors in biblical interpretation to force upon them this meaning. This narrow, short-sighted view of their meaning entirely overlooks both the glory of that life which comes to us through Christ, and the fearfulness of that woe which awaits the finally impenitent.

But we must pursue the thread of our discourse and enquire,

I. INTO THE KIND OF LOVE HERE SPOKEN OF.

II. WHAT IT IS TO BELIEVE IN CHRIST.

III. WHAT IS IMPLIED IN TRUE FAITH.

I. The kind of love here spoken of.

In the text we are told that God so loved the world as to give his Son for it. Does the emphasis upon the word so turn solely upon the degree of this love without respect to its nature? Does the text mean simply to assert that God loved the world so much, or that his love was moreover of such a nature that He could yield up his Son for a lost world? Plain the latter comes into consideration, and we are to study the nature as well as the degree of this love.

Directing our attention to this point it is obvious to remark,

1. That this was not the love of complacency. Complacency is a delight in the character of its object, or in other words is benevolence modified by the consideration of a holy character in its object. Now at the time God so loved us as to give his Son, there was nothing in us upon which complacency could rest. God so loved us as to form the purpose of giving up his Son before any soul was converted--while the race lay before his mind in the attitude of rebels. God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. It could therefore have been no love of complacency which loved us while yet sinners.

2. It was not the love of fondness or natural affection--such love as parents have for their children. Some seem to suppose that this was the love of God--but they utterly mistake its real nature.

3. But positively this love is without doubt benevolence--good-willing, a disposition to promote the highest good of beings, not, as some conceive of it, without regard to their persons as individuals, but with such regard to individuals as to their own personal state and wants. This in general is doubtless the true conception of this love of God which induced him to give up his Son.

4. This love on the part of God is entirely disinterested. This is most fully apparent in the fact that God was willing to make personal sacrifices for the end in view. Instead of having any immediate good to himself as the object, the text tells us that he so loved the world as to make the greatest possible personal sacrifice--that of giving up his own Son to ignominy, torture, death. What more decided proof could be given of disinterested love than this!

5. It was impartial love. It fasted on the race, on all the individuals of the race, and on all without respect to persons. It had no special favors for certain castes; it looked not at certain classes as such; it made no distinction between the rich and the poor, the free and the bond, the high or the low, the white or the red or the black; no; it rested impartially and equally on all. It looked not with such an eye as men often cast over their fellows--scorning some and adoring others; nay, it was an eye of pity and love for all. It raised no other question than this--What is the value of each person's well-being? Then each is appreciated according to its real value.

6. It was a holy love. Intense affection it was indeed for sinning man; yet had it no complacency towards sin. Nothing could be more utterly opposed to sin than this love which sought the good of sinners. Else it had never devised such a plan of salvation, had never made a sacrifice of the just for the unjust. Love sought earnestly to save, yet only by putting away all iniquity--only by providing a way of pardon which fully honored the divine law--only by providing such influences as should effectually cleanse the soul from

its pollutions.

7. This love was just. God could not let his love conflict with justice. He could not leave this throne to suffer by the pardon of sin without such an atonement as should fully sustain the dignity of law and effectually secure the interests of other beings who might be tempted to sin. God's love was blended with justice, else he had not given up his Son.

8. This love of God for sinners was real. Sometimes persons speak of both the love and the wrath of God, as if it had no reality--as if the Bible language on these points was wholly an accommodation to human weakness, meaning perhaps that God will act as men do when they love or are angry, while yet no such affections as these really exist in the divine mind. But the truth is that God really feels, yes, really has the very affections and states of mind which these words describe--and in all their most fervid intensity. His love is most intense, most sincere--all-absorbing--self-consuming. If you have experienced it you know how strong affections sometimes absorb and seem to consume the very vitality of the soul; the physical powers fail under the consuming, exhausting influence of intense mental action.

You know it was said of Christ, "The zeal of thine house has eaten me up"--as if his very being were consumed by his burning zeal for the house and the cause of God. It seems clear from several intimations in scripture that our Savior had the appearance of premature old age. "So marred was his visage more than any man and his form more than the sons of men," that kings and nations wondered at the strange spectacle.

On one occasion the Jews said to him "Thou art not yet fifty years old." We may infer from this that he appeared to be nearly fifty years old, though in fact as the Bible shows he was not much over thirty. Hence we may presume that his physical frame was intensely shattered while yet young in years. He must have used up his vital powers with consuming, self-regardless efforts for human well-being and by the intense, burning power of his mental excitement.

So of the love of God. It is not to be supposed that mind itself is consumed with intense action; but the body is; and in mortal flesh, the waste upon the body becomes an index often of the intense and exhausting action of the soul. The love of God may be seen in the love of Christ. "He that hath seen me, said Christ, hath seen the Father."

9. This love is great, beyond all finite comprehension. Perhaps we get the most vivid conception of God's love by means of comparisons. See that parent who loves his child most tenderly. His son may be wayward, insolent, ungrateful; yet shall you see the father's love unchanging; still he forbears, still he is patient and long-suffering; still he waits and hopes, and plans every conceivable method to restore that way-ward son. Verily here is love, but it is only such love as God's towards us--but infinitely less in degree.

See also that affectionate mother. Her little infant frets and cries--her love endures it patiently. That dear child will not let her sleep, and her nervous system is well nigh prostrated;--still for her own child what will not a mother's love endure?

But oh, what is all this compared with the matchless forbearance and long-suffering of the God of Love! We shall never appreciate this till we see in their true colors the sinner's abuse and contempt of God's law and of his gospel too--till we see how God waits on the sinner and how the sinner grows only the more stubborn and insolent; how God sends him repeated tokens of his love and he only mocks God's mercy in return. Such is God's love that He not only forbears to punish, but sends his own Son to save,--yea sends

his own Son to die that the rebel might live. What a spectacle! There lay spread out before the eye of God a world steeped in wickedness, reeking in its own pollutions--mad in its own rebellion; yet the heart of God pitied--there burned in his bosom the most intense love, and from his inmost soul he cried out--"How can I give thee up!" O what love was this! Love not only sincere and real, but infinitely great.

We are to think of this love to enemies; not to friends. It was not such love as husbands have for their wives, or parents for their children; no, but "God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." This it is that commends and sets off this amazing love of God in a light so glorious. Behold, says another apostle--behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we--that such as we,--should be called the sons of God! Well might he say--"what MANNER of love!" Was ever love like this in earth or heaven?

10. This is a most persevering and efficient love. It is not a mere emotion that flashes and burns itself out without producing action. It is not that sort of good feeling seen among men, that goes off in good wishes and leaves no fruit behind; that says to each object of need, "be ye warmed, and be ye filled," but gives not the things requisite. O, had God's love for man been only such as this, how deep and dire the ruin in which we had sunk, hopelessly, and forever!

The love of God to man was no empty and evanescent emotion. It has continued to sway the attributes of Deity for thousands of years, and will for coming ages, how many soever may be included in the divine plan for perfecting this glorious scheme of salvation. The love of God to man has called forth his infinite wisdom to devise, his omnipotence to execute, and we might perhaps say that this love has employed, not to say, used up, the divine energies since the creation of the world. O, who can adequately estimate all that God has done already in devising and carrying into effect this great scheme of human salvation!

11. This love moreover is particular, and not merely general. By this, I mean that it fastens upon individuals, seeking their good, and does not merely embrace the mass as a whole. We are too apt to conceive of this love as only general, and not as particular at all. We are not wont to feel that God truly and deeply loves us--yea, our own insignificant selves. Yet, this is the only right mode of apprehending the love of God. That eye that marks each falling sparrow, and counts the hairs of our head, is surely able to notice the meanest of his intelligent creatures, and the smallest circumstances which can affect their happiness.

II. What it is to believe in Christ.

It is something more than to be convinced of the truth of what is said in the Bible. This conviction may be in our minds as firm as the mountains; and yet we may have no gospel faith. Devils may believe, and in this sense they do--wicked men may and usually do have this faith of conviction--they may be convinced of the truth respecting Christ, and yet have no more saving faith than devils have.

But positively, faith is trust, it is depending upon Christ, relying upon him for every thing which as a Savior he promises to do for us. The soul, believing, thoroughly commits itself to God, yielding up all its interests to be disposed of according to his wisdom. More on these points soon.

III. What is implied in faith.

1. A realization of our actual dependence upon him. This idea of dependence must become a living idea, a practical reality to the mind, or we shall never really depend upon Christ.

This remark applies both to justification and to sanctification. As to justification, we must fully realize that without Christ we never can be pardoned and restored to a state of acceptance and justification before God. Else we shall never look to him in the gospel sense so as to receive justification unto life.

So also in respect to sanctification. Until it becomes a reality which the mind deeply feels, that we can be cleansed from sin only through faith in Christ, it is absolutely certain that we shall never by faith take hold of those promises for life.

2. It implies a realizing sense of the nature and extent of our death in sin. We must see and feel that we are really dead in sin; for until we see this, we shall of course be full of self-righteous efforts. No man ever will, or ever can believe on Christ till he sees this. Why should he? He seems in his own eyes able to help himself, and nothing therefore is more natural than to prosecute self-righteous efforts until the conviction fastens upon the mind that all is hopeless and fruitless till Jesus interpose. The man must see that he is hopelessly dead in sin--as much lost beyond hope without Christ as if he were already in hell, or had been there for ages.

3. It implies a penetrating sense of our utter disinclination towards any good. This is indeed the same thing as being dead in sin, and is only another phraseology for the same idea.

Many who are not Christians have no just sense of this. Indeed they have no just view of God and of his law. Perhaps they think they want religion, and are inclined to embrace it. O, how deceived! They need to see their utter disinclination towards any good. Then they would see their dependence upon Christ. They would see that unless Christ interposes while they are in this state of utter disinclination, they are so utterly selfish that they never will embrace Christ for salvation. Let me ask, will an individual ever depend upon Christ, so long as he thinks himself well disposed by nature, and has no just views of his utter death in sin? No; never.

Faith then implies that we understand our utter moral impotency, and utter disinclination towards God while in an unrenewed state. When one sees this, he is prepared to see that unless a sanctifying Christ undertake for him, damnation is certain. He sees that the thing he needs to be saved from is this selfish, morally dead state of mind.

Around this point, there hangs in the views of many minds an unaccountable darkness. They do not see the very thing, to pardon and remove which they need Christ. They are feeling about after some particular sins, lying, perhaps, or theft, or Sabbath-breaking, from which they suppose they need Christ to save them. Yet, what are all these, and all such sins, but the mere bubbling up of a certain state of mind--a little of the overflowing water from that deep and vast ocean of iniquity which spreads itself all over their inner moral being? It is this state of mind--this deep sink of iniquity, the rooted selfishness in which you have accustomed yourself to live and move and have your being--this it is from which you need to be saved. This is the great thing which needs to be set right. Do you understand this? What is it that you need when your heart sighs within you for peace, and you look to religion for help? What do you need? This only--to have your disposition to sin taken away, and in its place, a disposition to serve and please God. When you come to see yourself as you are in all your relations to God and duty, you will see that your own state of mind is the very thing you need to be saved from. You will see that this is really more terrible, and more to be feared than all the devils in hell. You need not fear the mightiest devils if your own state of mind is not radically wrong.

What then are you doing? Groping about to get rid of some one or two sins as if these were all from which you need be saved? Have you not yet learned that the thing you need first and chiefly is to be saved from a selfish state of mind, a state which is radically averse from, or enmity against God?

4. Another thing implied is a realization that God loves us. I mean just this--that God loves us, not the world merely and in the general sense, but ourselves in particular. The idea must come to the soul with convincing, melting power--God loves me. His pity and compassion reach even me.

Unless one understands this, how can he be penetrated with penitence, gratitude and love? No, until this idea is realized, that God is so infinitely gracious and benevolent that he has set his love on me,--until this thought comes home, the soul feels that it dare not approach him. This will be the effect just in proportion as the guilt and plague of sin are thoroughly realized. If these are deeply realized, the soul must needs realize also the great love of God, or it will fly away from the presence of God as if that presence were hell itself.

I have known men often feel as if they could fly in any direction away from God, so deeply did conscious guilt oppress them, and so terrible to their souls was the thought of meeting God. Some of you have heard me say of Father Nash that his sense of God's awful presence was such when under conviction that he would have leaped into a lake of liquid fire at once if he could have thereby escaped the presence of God.

Hence, a realization of God's love to us is essential to real trust. First, you must see your sins--and then to prevent despair, and to save you from being repelled by your own conscious guilt from the presence of God, you must apprehend his infinite love. Seeing this, the soul cries out--"after all my guilt and ill-desert, God does love me. Yes, so much has he loved me, as to give his Son to die for me. Now, I see that I may come back at once to my own Father."

Without this view of the love of God, you feel as if you could not approach God at all; but this love being seen and felt, you come sobbing back, with a heart all broken to pieces. When you see not only that God loved the world, but that he even loves you--and so loves you that he gave his own Son to die for you, then you feel yourself aroused by mighty attractions. How can you resist the melting power of such love? O, you say, what can I do for God? How can I ever praise him enough?

Such a gospel meets human want and affords an adequate remedy for human selfishness. It presents tangible points of blessed truth upon which a guilty, despairing sinner may take hold.

5. An apprehension of the nature as well as degree of this love is essential to, and is implied in real faith. The mind must clearly see that this love of God to us is not complacency, but compassionate benevolence.

6. Finally, it implies an actual dependence upon Christ in all his offices and relations. This is obvious in itself, and has been so often illustrated before you that I need not enlarge upon it now.

REMARKS.

1. Many persons confound dependence with depending upon Christ. They talk about their dependence, without really depending upon Christ at all. Now it is one thing to say--I cannot be saved without Christ; and quite another thing actually to depend upon Christ. Father Nash used to say--I could sometimes see my dependence so clearly that I would gnash my teeth and swear and curse, daring God to do his worst; yet I was infinitely far from really depending upon Christ.

2. Faith always implies a sense of dependence, but this sense of being dependent does not always imply faith. Yet often people who talk much about dependence, have no realizing sense of the thing, and really make this talk an apology for doing nothing.

3. Many overlook the identity between depending on Christ and true faith. Let this then be ever remembered, that depending on Christ is the same thing as real faith. Real faith is a depending for justification on Christ, and on nothing else; it also[,] in the same exclusive manner depends on Christ for sanctification. In regard to both of these blessings, real faith is a depending on Christ. We are greatly deceived if we think these are different things, for they are precisely the same thing.

We can easily understand what it is to depend on Christ, for dependence of a similar sort is a perfectly common thing in the ordinary relations of human life. One young man comes here to study. He knows that various expenses will be accruing, for board, for books, for clothing, &c. Now he has no expectation of paying these bills himself--he depends on his father to pay them for him. He is not anxious on these points; he knows very well that his father is both able and willing to do all for him that he can need.

But another young student may be here who has no father to depend on; but perhaps he looks to the church to which he belongs, as they may have pledged themselves to help him; and still another, having neither parent, nor pledged supporters to depend on, depends upon himself. He expects to labor during the terms of study, and teach in vacations.

I allude to cases of this sort to show that the idea of depending on others is perfectly familiar to all minds. We are trained into it from the very dawn of life.

Such is the Christian's depending upon Christ. To Him the Christian looks for his ceaseless supply of every want. This is faith.

4. The doctrine of human ability as it lies in many minds produces nothing else than self-confidence and self-dependence as opposed to faith. Many have such an idea of human ability that they suppose they shall readily by dint of their own resolutions and efforts do what God requires of them. Such an idea renders dependence on Christ morally impossible. How can he depend on Christ when he thinks he can just as well depend upon himself? It is therefore wholly indispensable to true faith that the doctrine of human ability should be in such a shape in the mind as to encourage faith,--nay, rather, as to enforce the conviction that without aid from Christ, obtained by depending on Him, we are certainly undone. In fact the idea of human ability as often apprehended, is nothing else than the spirit of Anti-Christ. It stands directly and insuperably in the way of the soul's reliance upon Christ for the grace requisite for saving the soul from sin. Faith is forever impossible till this notion of self-sufficiency is utterly put away.

5. The doctrine of dependence, also, as it lies in some minds works mischief; for it begets a self-justifying spirit. Persons get the idea that they are in such a sense naturally unable that God cannot rationally require of them obedience. In conversation with a lady sometime since, she said, "I believe God was bound in justice to send Christ to die for sinners, and is bound now to do for sinners all that he requires them to be and to do." When she came to explain her views it appeared that she considered herself as not guilty but only unfortunate on account of her sinful nature--unfortunate in having ever sinned at all, so as to need a Savior's atonement; unfortunate in having a state of mind so selfish and averse from God, that without gracious aid she never would accept of a Savior already provided. Hence she thought God would be unjust if he did not help her out of the troubles into which under God's universal agency she had unfortunately fallen.

After I had shown her that she had fundamentally mistaken the nature of sin, and that she could not be innocent in entertaining such views, condemned as they certainly were by her own reason and conscience, the husband said--"I have sometimes thought my wife one of the most pious of women, and again I have thought that she had no piety at all." The wife rose, and went to her chamber in a dreadful agony and conflict of mind--kept her room for two days--and then came down, all melted, subdued, transformed to the very spirit of a lamb. She no longer held God accountable for her sins, or bound in justice to give her converting grace.

6. True and deep conviction of sin is the only remedy for either of these errors. In the first case, where the man has high notions of his own ability; only let God show him his own utter wickedness, the deep and fearful depravity of his voluntarily selfish heart, and he will see that his ability is only a mountain of lead on his soul to sink it deep in the waves of damnation. Look at that sinner. Suppose God shows him just what he is doing; makes him see his own voluntary agency in sin--makes him see that he might have done good rather than evil--that God endowed him with capacities for doing all his duty; then let the Spirit of God also show him how he resists and fights against God with all his might, and make him see his own heart to be black and guilty as hell;--then see what he will say. "O, he cries, this ability of mine is working out for me the deepest damnation. My whole heart is set upon iniquity. No other being in the universe can be so vile as I. O, surely, I am working my way down to the deepest hell."

When the Lord has thus shown him his amazing guilt, he will no longer depend on the fact of his being philosophically able to repent. He will neither deem this a meritorious thing, nor will he rely upon it for his own salvation. He will see that this ability of his has been the occasion of his meriting a deeper damnation than he otherwise could have done; and that his infatuated abuse of it is always such that he can depend on himself only to work out his own damnation.

So of the other man who makes God responsible for his own sin, for his being impenitent, and for giving him repentance. Let this man only be convicted thoroughly of his own sin, and he will no longer say--"God in justice ought to help me out." O, how he will abhor this very thought and the state of mind that can admit it for a moment! Now his mind turns upon himself in bitter self-execrations. He sees that he has no one to condemn but himself.

7. The love of God to man is entirely consistent with his anger against sin. There is a father who finds it necessary for the best good of his child to punish him. But does this prove that the father does not love his son? By no means. He never gives a more conclusive proof of his love for his son than when his intense desire to secure his highest good is so strong as to overcome all the reluctance a father's heart feels to the infliction of pain upon a child. This is the love of real benevolence.

The same benevolent regard to the good of the rest of the family might constrain a father to punish his son, even though the hope of reclaiming him may be entirely abandoned and form no part of the motive for punishing. So God in love to the universe may punish the sinner after all hope of his being thereby reclaimed has past away forever. He may do this for the sake of a public example.

8. The love of God is of such a kind as to demand that he should abhor the wickedness of man and man on account of it.

The reason of this is obvious. This love of God is real benevolence--a sincere desire for the happiness of his creatures. But God knows perfectly well that sin necessarily and fatally destroy happiness; hence he cannot but hate it, and hate men and devils too on account of it.

9. Self-righteous men often mistake the nature of this love, supposing it to be fondness, and that it does not involve a holy and infinite abhorrence of all sin. No mistake could be greater than this.

10. It is hard for a selfish being to realize the nature of this disinterested love. This is one of the most difficult conceptions for the selfish mind to form. The reason of this difficulty is obvious. Men are naturally inclined to judge the character and motives of the Deity as they do their own, making God altogether such a being as themselves. Consequently being supremely selfish themselves, they suppose God also to be selfish. When you hear a man therefore denying that God is really benevolent, or speaking of him as if he were selfish like sinning mortals, you may know that that man is supremely selfish.

It sometimes seems impossible to make wicked men conceive of God as being truly benevolent. It is so perfectly unlike their own state of mind, they seem almost incapable of apprehending what it is, and withal are by no means very ready to admit that God is so very much better than themselves.

In the same way the sinner is prone to conceive of Christians as feeling towards him as he does towards them. He often has no idea that Christians really love him intensely, and feel the deep yearnings of compassion over him in view of his present wretchedness and coming doom. He seems to have no idea that God, angels, saints, and all the holy in earth or heaven, feel utterly different from himself.

Sometimes impenitent sinners have been broken down completely by kind treatment. Such treatment where they had reason to expect its opposite, has sometimes made the idea flash into their mind that there is real benevolence in other hearts, although there is none in their own.

Many years since I knew a man who had abused a Christian in the worst possible way. So outrageous was this abuse that on reflection he felt constrained to go and make some confession to the Christian whom he had abused. What was his amazement to find that this Christian man had not the least ill feeling towards him--had no rebukes or reproaches to utter--that he had cherished no other feelings than compassion; and now, as soon as he saw him, his benevolent heart gushed out in compassion, and sympathy. O when the wicked man saw this, it brought before his mind the new and thrilling idea,--It may be that God really loves me. Perhaps God too and all other holy beings are seeking my good and really care for my soul.

This is one of the most important considerations to get before the mind of any class of sinners, whether of backsliders or of those who have never professed repentance. There is a most melting power in the thought--God, my Maker and my Father, feels real and infinite compassion for me. Many a heart has bowed before God and been broken in godly sorrow under the power of this consideration.

It is a striking fact that the Bible often presents this feature of the divine character in a strong and most affecting light. "Since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still;--therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore, with loving kindness have I drawn thee." O could you who have wandered and backslidden only get this idea into your mind--could you only see how sincerely and earnestly your Maker is entreating you to return to himself--you could not refuse to come. Hear what the Psalmist said--"Has God forgotten to be gracious? and will he be favorable no more? Has he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Then I said, This is my infirmity." Truly so. This is your infirmity, that you should cherish such apprehensions of God. O how can you cherish such thoughts of cold unbelief? Could you but understand how greatly God desires your return--could you see for once how deeply his compassions are awakened towards you and how cordially he would welcome you back to his bosom, it could not fail to break down all

your pride, and melt your soul in penitence.

11. There is no danger that this view of the love of God should make men hard-hearted, stupid and reckless. Nothing else has such power as this to soften and melt the hearts of men. Nothing else can be compared with this to subdue rebellion; transform selfishness to benevolence, and regenerate the polluted soul into the image of God.

12. A realization of the nature and reality of the love of God is indispensable to true religion. Without this, all will be hard-hearted. Without this no one can know what it is to have an unction shed over all the soul, drawing it into deep communion with God, and awakening a calm and settled confidence in the Lord of Hosts as our own God and Father.

13. An apprehension of this needs to become an omnipresent reality, before men can be established in grace. I can testify on this point from experience. Nothing has had such an influence on my mind as this. When I go to God deeply realizing that he loves me more than I love myself, and loves to give more than I love to receive, then I feel that I may be strong in prayer and in faith. When I go to prayer for my family and can feel that God loves them more than I do--when I pray for my sick wife, and can see that God cares for her comfort and usefulness and for the interests of my family more than I possibly can, I then feel that it were cruel unbelief not to trust God for every possible good. So when I pray for Oberlin, it is good to feel that God planted this vine and he can water it at his will, and can defend it so that the "bear out of the wood shall not waste it, nor the wild beast of the field devour it." If this vine is good for any thing in his vineyard, he values it more than I do; he loves its prosperity more, and is more ready to make efforts for sustaining and enlarging it.

Every thing in short which pertains to his kingdom, he loves more than I do. His whole being is awake to these interests--yea, more, to every body's interests,--his word having told me that he feeds even the ravens when they cry, and much more will feed his "little ones."

13. A realization of this truth is indispensable to prevalence in prayer. In order to prevail in prayer you need to realize that God loves you infinitely more than you love yourself--that He loves Zion more than you do, and loves to see sinners converted infinitely more than you ever have, or ever will. Your heart will then be strong in prayer when you see that He truly cares for you, and cares for all human happiness, so that you have no need to excite his feelings, for his soul is already on fire, all awake with most intensely glowing emotions of love, and with one changeless purpose to promote the highest happiness of every sentient being in his universe as far as he wisely can. O, to have such a God to pray to, and to come before him with these realization of his ineffable love--this quickens faith and gives vitality to the soul of prayer. Brethren, do learn how to pray to such a God as this!

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