

"WITH ALL."

The commandment that we shall love our neighbor as ourselves is so strongly emphasized in these days, that among the rank and file of people the first and great commandment is more and more forgotten. That it is everyone's calling first of all not only to serve the Lord, but to love him—who thinks of this?

This substitution of the second in the place of the first commandment has captivated the popular mind to such an extent, that even among believers love for God has lost much warmth and tenderness. Appeals in the house of prayer for charitable and philanthropic work get more eager hearing than the far higher call of love for God. This changing and turning about of the order here is fatal. He who loves God will also love his brother. But it does not hold true in every case that he who loves his brother also loves God. The first commandment guarantees the second, but not the second the first. To be warmly affectioned toward God, and cold toward a brother, is unthinkable. But many men and women are prominent in all sorts of charitable and philanthropic works who are stone-cold toward God, and who at times even deny his existence.

It is necessary, therefore, that the counterpoise be placed in the scale, and that throughout the church the great commandment to love God be solemnly impressed upon the heart. The voice of this call should everywhere be loudly heard again. And the preacher would have a right understanding of his duty if week by week he

would bind this love for God upon the conscience of his hearers, with such warmth and eloquence, that the whole congregation would be impressed with his tender devotion to God, and would be inspired by his zeal to such a degree as to be itself revived in its love for God, with the board of officials in the lead. The press also should have a part in this. By means of these meditations we seek to direct attention in every possible way to the necessity of making, more than has yet been done, communion with, and knowledge of, and love for God, our daily business. Sound creeds, a blameless walk, and good works are undoubtedly indispensable. But the marrow of all religion is fellowship with the Eternal. And in this fellowship it is only love for God in which the brightness of gold glitters.

And yet as soon as we press this love for God, we face a very great difficulty. It presents itself in the two words, which stand at the head of this meditation, or rather in the last of the two, even in this painful word *all*. Would you love God? Then, says Jesus, you must love him with *all* your soul, with *all* your heart, and with *all* your mind. And this, let us humbly confess, is not achieved in this life by the holiest of saints. Sin and the world have so estranged us from God that sometimes it takes an utmost effort, even a few times a day, apart from our regular prayers, to lift up the heart to God in a conscious utterance of love. Is it saying too much when we add, that many prayers are said at home and in church, during which the soul does not commune with God? And when at times we did succeed in having the soul go out in love to God, what

then was the degree of tenderness in the love, and how long did this exaltation of soul continue? More yet, how often did it become in us a thirsting after God? And suppose we have come thus far, not every day, but most days, how far distant are we even then from loving God with all the heart, and all the soul, and all our consciousness? For this *all* must also include *all* the day, so that our love for God never escapes us, even in sleep.

Naturally, a distinction must here be made. Love for God can spring up in the heart, can scintillate in the word, can restrain sin and selfishness, and inspire deeds of devotion and heroic courage. But the inspiration of this love can very well operate in us, while we may not be conscious of our love for God, nor of the reciprocal working of God's love for us in our heart. From love for God a martyr can go into death, and in the moment of dying be so abstracted by deadly pain, or by the taunts of his executioners, that for the moment tender communion of love with God is impossible. It is equally true that business or professional duties, intercourse with people and the cares of daily life may so engage our minds that with perchance a passing thought of God, we are utterly unable to center our mind on God. But though we keep all this out of count, it is still the great commandment, to love God with all the heart, with all the soul, and with all the mind. And who of us has ever succeeded in doing more of this than a small part of the whole?

But there is One who has not fainted before this first and great commandment, but no more

than one: even Christ. Jesus alone has fulfilled the second commandment of love to fellowmen, and with respect to this, be it at a far distance, many saints have pressed his footsteps. But in the fulfilment of the first and great commandment Jesus stands incomparably alone. He alone has loved God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind and with all his strength, always, even unto the end, without one moment's interruption. This is his crown of glory. Therein is the life of the world. Think him away and the whole world, with its thousand millions of people, stands before God without one among them who has kept the great, supreme and first commandment. But he has come, and now there is One from whose real human heart and real human soul and real human consciousness proceeds this pure, full, unalloyed love for God, for the joy of which, Almighty God has created all mankind. This is the shield which is lifted up upon us. This accounts for the fact that God can still tolerate this world and bear it.

With us also this will come. Many of our beloveds, who in the earth did not reach it by far, in the realms of everlasting light now bring this perfect love-offering to God. And we shall come to it when in death we shall fully die unto sin and we shall be done with the world, and shall know God even as we are known. That is, if we fall asleep in Jesus, if in death there shall be nothing left to separate us from him.

And that which makes us cleave to Christ is just this: That we love God, that the love of God has been poured out in our hearts, that the love of God has operated in us, that with us

the love of God has come first, and that with all our imperfections and shortcomings it has been our deepest desire and will to have God's love be our supremest inspiration, and that it has prepared us for what is highest and best. And this is the mystery of being a Christian, that as we hide ourselves in the perfect love wherewith Jesus has loved God, through the glow of his love for God, we feel the spark of our love for God burn in our own heart, and that, when it goes out, Jesus kindles it again.

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“WITH ALL THINE HEART.”

Underneath, still deeper than the heart, lives the soul. When God searches a person he tries not merely the heart, but enters still more deeply into his being. The Scripture expresses this plastically by saying that after God has tried the heart he also trieth the reins (Jer. 11:20) in order to examine us in our inmost parts. In moments of extreme tension it is felt, even among us, that the heart is not yet all, but that we must reach down to the marrow of our inmost self. We see it in the case of Jonathan. When David had sworn that he would always be faithful to him and to his house, Jonathan, deeply moved, replied: “Whatsoever thy soul desireth, I will even do it for thee” (I Sam. 20:4).

In all seriousness the only element of worth in the heart is that which comes into it from the soul, and passes through it to the soul. What goes on outside of the soul may indeed be very attractive. It is less captivating when only the