

Twenty Motives, or Pleas, that Christ Might Have the Love of Your Hearts

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I. Can you find a more excellent object for your love than Christ? If you search through the whole creation of God is there any like to Christ? Whatsoever you think, who dare say there is? Are riches, honours, pleasures, relations, which you have loved, comparable to Christ, whom you ought to love? If good be only the object of love, is not the best good the best object? can you love the lesser good, and not the greater? yea, the greatest of all? Is not all the goodness in the creature but as a drop to the sea, as a candle to the sun, as a sand to a mountain, if compared to the goodness there is in Christ? If David were worth ten thousand of others (2 Sam. 18:3) is not Christ, David's Lord, better than all the world? (Read Cant. 2:3; 5:16; Prov. 3:14, 15; Phil. 3:8). Dost thou waver in thy thoughts, or hesitate about this? Tell me,

1. Is not Christ a good most suitable for thee? Is liberty so suitable to a captive man, or bread to a hungry man, or health to a sick man, or ease to a pained man, as Christ is to a sinful man? for,

(1.) Art thou not lost, undone, in danger to be damned? Christ will be thy Saviour, thy keeper, and recoverer. "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost," (Luke 19:10). "Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). "Mighty to save" (Isa. 63:1).

(2.) Art not thou ignorant, dark, and blind, knowest not the way to heaven and eternal happiness, and mightest weary thyself to find the gate of life, and yet miss it when thou hast done all? He will be thy Teacher and thy Guide, and direct thee infallibly to it. He will anoint thine eyes, and cause thee to see such things as never yet thou sawest (Rev. 3:18). If he anoint thine eyes with his eye-salve, though thou wast born blind, thou shalt have thy sight.

(3.) Art thou not sick, and full of spiritual diseases? abounding with soul- distempers? even sick to death? nigh to eternal death? He will be thy Physician, who is so able and so skillful, that never any yet, whom he undertook to cure, died under his hands: for rather than thou shouldst die of thy disease, he will make thee a potion of his own blood, which, if thou drinkest, thou shalt certainly recover. Therefore he came to be a soul-physician, and gave this as a reason why he did converse with publicans and sinners, that he might cure them (Matt. 9:12).

(4.) Art thou not indebted? owest thou not millions to God? Hast thou a mite to pay? if God demand satisfaction from thee, will it not prove thy damnation? if justice pursue thee, death arrest thee, will not devils seize thy soul, and hale it to the prison of hell, from whence thou shalt not be delivered, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing, which will never be? This Christ, if thou wilt but love him, will be thy bail, become thy Surety, and make payment of thy debt, and give thee a discharge.

(5.) Art thou not polluted and unclean? hath not the leprosy of sin overspread thine understanding, will, conscience, memory, and all thine affections? so that thou art defiled all over, liest wallowing in thy blood, art cast out to the loathing of thy person; and canst thou, in this filthy case, enter into the holy kingdom of God? If thou wilt give him thy love, he will take away thy filthy rags, and give thee change of raiment (Zech. 3:1-5). If thou wilt come to him with faith and love, and say, "lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," he in love to thee will say, "I will, be thou clean" (Matt. 8:2, 3). He will make for thee a bath of his own blood, and his blood shall cleanse thee from all thy sins (1 John 1:7). Yea, "though they be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18).

(6.) Art thou not a captive to Satan and to sin? drudging elbow deep in the loathsome service of sin? Is not thy bondage more hard than that of the Israelites in Egypt? and are not Satan and sin as cruel and tyrannical as Pharaoh and his task-masters? Dost thou love thy chains? art thou at ease in thy fetters? wouldst thou be released? Christ will be thy Redeemer, by price and by power, and make thee free; and then thou shalt be free

indeed.

(7.) Art thou not an enemy to God? born so, and lived so? Take heed thou dost not die so, for then there shall be no peace, no making up the breach between God and thy soul. But now Christ is the blessed peacemaker, and by the blood of his cross he will reconcile thee to God (Col. 1:20, 2). God will never be reconciled to thee, but in and through Christ (2 Cor. 5:18, 19).

(8.) Art thou not spiritually dead? hast thou not lost the holy image of God, which was thy beauty? Though thou art dead, he can quicken thee, and give thee the life of grace and glory (1 John 5:12).

Now, if this be thy condition, and Christ can and is ready, able, and willing, to help thee in every respect, how suitable is Christ to thee? and suitability being a ground of love, and a motive thereunto, what an argument is here to win thy love? O say then, I am lost, but Christ will save me; I am ignorant, but Christ will teach me; I am sick, and he will recover me; I am indebted, and he will be a surety for me; I am polluted, and he will cleanse me; I am a captive, and he will redeem me; I am an enemy to God, and he will reconcile me; I am dead, and he will quicken me. Oh, I never found one so suitable for me; now, even now, he shall be loved by me. Oh this is the most excellent object for my love, and I will no longer hold it from him.

2. Is not Christ the most satisfying good? Thou art indigent, he will supply thee; thou art empty, he will fill thee; thou art poor, he will enrich thee. O for love to such a Saviour!

3. Is not Christ the most durable good? When thy riches shall fail thee; thy pleasures, and honours, and friends, shall fail, Christ will never fail (Psa. 73: 26).

4. Is not Christ a peculiar good? given by peculiar love, only to a peculiar people, bringing with him peculiar privileges; when all other things thou lovest, are common to the bad, as well as to the good? Though a worldly man, whose heart and hands, and house, are full of the world, might say, Riches are mine, yet he cannot truly say, Christ is mine. Let him have from thee peculiar love, and he will be to thee a peculiar good.

5. Is not Christ the most necessary good? Dost thou need food so much when thou art hungry, or liberty so much when thou art in prison, or salve when thou art wounded, as Christ when thou hast sinned? Without other things thou mayest be happy, pardoned, reconciled, and for ever saved; but can any of these be thine without Christ? Christ is needful, while thou livest, for if thou art in health, without him thy soul is sick. If thou shouldst be sick, he will give the choicest and the richest cordial; when thou diest, he will secure thy departing soul; and after death, he will be thy Friend; when all shall leave thee at thy grave, he will be thine for ever.

6. Is not Christ the most profitable good? For when thou hast him, thou hast all. Then God is thine, and the Spirit is thine, and the promises are thine, and the privileges of the covenant are thine; and heaven itself shall be for ever thine.

7. Is not Christ the most delightful good? Some delight in what they see, some in what they hear, some in what they taste, some in recreation, and some in notions, but the delight of Christ doth surpass them all.

8. Is not Christ a sure good? Other things God may give, and call for them back again: "I will return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wool and my flax," (Hos. 2:9). But God never saith, I gave such a man my Christ, but I will take away my Christ again. He may take riches out of thy hand, but, if thou gettest him, he will never take Christ out of thy heart.

9. What shall I say to advance Christ in thy esteem, that thou mayest love him? Is he not a comprehensive good? eminently all? There is no goodness in the creature, but it is formally, or virtually, in Christ. Is there wisdom in the creature? there is more in Christ. Is there beauty, power, in the creature? there is much more in Christ: "For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell" (Col. 5:19), "full of grace and truth," (John 1:14).

This is the person for whom I beg your love. This is He who is altogether lovely and desirable. Consider now, I beseech you; can you be better offered? can you find a better match for your soul? can you say all this, the one half of this, any one of all these things, concerning the objects you have hitherto loved? Oh then say, I never understood the loveliness of Christ before: how hath sin befooled me! how hath the world bewitched me! and how hath my

foolish wicked heart deceived me, that I have lavished my love upon the creature, and sin, when there was a Christ to love! Such a Christ to love! such a good as is not to be found in all the world! Now shall he have my love, my heart, my all.

II. Tell me, hath not Christ deserved your love, by what he hath suffered, done, given, purchased, promised, and prepared for those who love him? Behold his wounds which he hath endured for thee! behold a crown of thorns on his head, that there may be a crown of glory upon thine! Behold him dying, that thou mayest live! him suffering, that thou mayest be saved! him poor, that thou mayest be made rich with the best, surest, and most durable riches. Behold him condemned, that thou mayest be absolved! him in an agony, that thou upon the conditions of the gospel mightest have rest and ease in glory. Behold him bearing the cross, and the cross bearing him, that thou mightest not bear the curse! him bearing the Father's wrath, that thou mightest be made the subject of his grace, and the object of his love. And now tell me, doth not this Christ deserve thy love? Shouldest thou love any like him, when none hath done for thee like him? Doth the small kindness of a creature draw thy love, and shall not all this in thy Saviour, towards thee, kindle a fire of love in thee towards him? How canst thou forbear to love him?

III. Will not love to Christ be the best love thou canst attain unto? As he is the best object of love, so love going out to Christ is the best acting of love; and pity it is, that any other object should go away with thy prevailing love. For,

1. Love to Christ will be the sweetest love. He that loveth other things, and not Christ, loves nothing but vanity, and to love vanity will prove vexation. He that loveth riches hath vexing sorrow with his love, fretting fears, and perplexing, cutting cares. When thou lovest thy relations, if they be bad, the more thou lovest, the more thou art wounded; if they be good, the more evil befalls them, the more thou art grieved. There cannot be love to other things, without love to Christ, but it will be bitter love; for thou wilt repent of that love, or thou wilt not. If thou dost, then thou wilt find more sorrow for it, more bitterness in it, than ever thou didst find delight, and say, Oh now it doth repent me that ever I loved the world as I have done; my pleasures, my sin, as I have done. But thou wilt never have cause to say, I repent that ever I loved Christ. Never was such a word heard from the mouth of a sincere lover of Christ; if thou dost never repent of thy love to the world and sin, that love will certainly end in sorrow, and with bitterness of soul be fruitlessly lamented in hell. But what content, satisfaction, delight, comfort, joy, there is in loving of Christ, none can tell so well as he who loves him.

2. Love to Christ is the safest love. No fear of sinning in this love, except it be in the smallness of the measure of it; but that is not to sin in loving, but not loving more. You might fear and tremble in loving other things, and say, Do not I sin in this? Is there not sinning in my loving?

3. Love to Christ is the surest. Love to other things is often turned into hatred: love today, and hate tomorrow; but this remaineth firm. The object is the surest object, neither men, nor death, nor devils, can take away the object of this love. It is surest in the habit and principle, the power of God, the prayer of Christ; the promise of both secure the preservation of it. It is surest in the act, for if we be careful, neither ourselves, nor men, nor devils, can hinder our acting of this love; they might keep us from hearing his word, but not from loving his person.

4. Love to Christ is the noblest love. Love to pleasures, to the world, to sin, is base, polluted love, this most sublime and raised; it hath the noblest and the highest object, it carrieth the soul in his thoughts and meditations after Him into the highest heavens, and hath complacency in the highest degree, and shall have for ever the highest reward.

5. Love to Christ is the longest: love that shall never end. Sirs, ere long, you will have done loving this world, even you who love it most, and have your hearts most set upon it. Ye who now have your hearts full of earth, when ye shall have your mouths full too, and your bodies lie rotting in the earth, you shall have done loving of it: death, which ends your life in the world, shall end your love to the world, which grace never did. Ye shall also have done, ere long, loving your relations; ye shall have done loving father and mother, brother and sister, and husband and wife, and children, as now in that relation; but the gracious soul, the lover of Christ, shall never have done loving Christ: it is sweet to have it, but this doth make it more sweet, to think he shall always have it—have it in life, have it at death, and have it after death. Oh blessed love, that shall never be lost, but ever last!

While I was musing upon this, it came into my mind to consider, what those who never love Christ in this world, can love in the next; and I could not imagine any thing which damned souls in hell, can love. (If it be that I understand

not, nor am acquainted with the acting of their souls nor state, God grant I never may, as they do.) I thought, can they love God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, angels, saints? their hatred to all these is, and shall be, more deeply radicated, that is, rooted in them, than ever upon earth. Can they love the place of hell? they wish they never had come thither. Can they love the pains of hell? they grieve and groan under them, and are weary to bear them. Can they love the devils in hell? they curse them for tempting them to sin, which brought them to that place. Can they love their companions in hell? they are an aggravation of one another's misery. Can they love their sin in hell? alas! all that was pleasurable in it is gone, and the pain and sting only do remain. Can they love their being in hell? they had rather die than live, and cease to be at all, than to continue to be there. I know not what it is that they can love. Oh loathsome place, where there is, and can be, no love! Oh lovely heaven! where love doth reign, where love doth live! and the life of them therein shall be for ever a life of love! And in this world, where love is wanting, so far it looks like hell. Where love, and that which is the best, love to Christ, doth prevail, so far it looks like heaven. Dear Lord! save me from hell, because there, there is no love to thee, nor to any thing that is good. Sweet Saviour! lead me in thy way to heaven, and bring me thither, where love to thee shall live and last for ever.

IV. Is it not great folly to love other things, and not Christ? For love ye will. There is such an affection as love in all your hearts, and something it will be set upon in this world, whatever it be with damned souls in the next. Now if Christ have it not, the world will; if Christ have it not, sin will. And do ye act as rational creatures, as men endued with reason, to deny your love to Christ, and give it to the world and sin? Set one over against the other, and then tell me,

1. Is it not great folly to love that which is worse than yourselves, and not that which is infinitely better? Do ye think your silver and your gold is better than yourselves, as much as ye love it? that your houses and your lands, as bad as ye are, are better than yourselves? But ye' are not yet so good nor yet so bad, but I hope ye will say and acknowledge that Christ is better.

2. Is it not great folly to love that which cannot love you again, and not him who would? Ye love your gold, but that cannot love you again. The clothes upon your back, the furniture in your houses, ye love; but these can make no returns of love. Ye give your love to them, but ye receive no love from them. Are ye not vexed, when ye love a man who doth not love you again, nor return love for love? And why are ye so well pleased, and are so well contented, in placing the very strength of your love on worldly things, where the return of love is not only not actual, but impossible? But would ye love Christ, ye should have more love from him than ye give unto him, if ye strive with all your might to love him with the utmost love you can (John 14:21, 23. Prov. 8:17).

3. Is it not great folly to love that which can never satisfy you, and not him who would satisfy your souls for ever? Did these things ye love ever fill your desires? Did they ever give you full content? How should they? When God hath made your souls capable of the enjoyment of an infinite good, how can that which is finite fill them? It is only an infinite good, and not finite, that can satisfy your souls, though they be finite; all the creatures cannot fill one. For the will of man, though it be subjectively finite, yet it is objectively infinite; that is, (for to be easy and plain in such a place as this, and in such matters as these, before you, is best, because for you most profitable and edifying,) though the will in itself, and in its own nature, because a creature, is finite and limited, yet it is capable of making choice of God for its chief good, who is infinite and unlimited. And God has put into the hearts of men desires after good that is eternal, for they desire to be eternally happy; but God hath not put this eternal goodness in any, in all the things of this world, for they are all transitory. Therefore when ye look for satisfaction in the creatures that ye love, or in the loving of them, ye look for that which God never put into them, and nothing can give more than it hath, and nothing hath more than God hath given it; therefore to look for more from it than God by making it hath put into it, may yield you vexation enough, but no satisfaction at all: "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase. This is also vanity," (Eccles. 5:10).

4. Is it not great folly to love that which ye must shortly part with, and not him whom ye might enjoy for ever? Though ye have your heart full of love to other earthly things, you shall not carry a handful of them to the other world: "As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand," (Eccl. 5:15). "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out;" (1 Tim. 6:7). But death, that carrieth the lovers of the world quite away from the things they love, shall set the soul of a lover of Christ nearer to him: "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better," (Phil. 1:23). The soul that loveth Christ, when, by death, it is absent from the body, it shall be present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8).

5. Is it not great folly to love that which might leave you while ye live, and not that Christ who would never leave you, nor forsake you? As ye are sure these things which ye love will be none of yours after death, so ye are

not sure they shall be yours while ye live. May ye not be rich today, and poor tomorrow? well today, and sick tomorrow? in honour today, and in disgrace tomorrow? Was it not so with Haman? (Esth. 6:10, 11, and 7, 9, 10). When ye have riches and love them, ye are not sure to hold them: "Wilt thou set thine eyes," thy heart and love, "upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings, and fly away as an eagle towards heaven," (Prov. 23:5). The Hebrew text is, Wilt thou cause thine eyes to fly upon that which is not? Riches fly away, and the worldly man's heart and love fly after them; and though his heart and love be swift in their motion after riches, yet sometimes riches fly so swiftly, that their lover cannot overtake them. The pleasures of sin, and so the profits of the world, are but for a season, (Heb. 11:25); and when the season is over, they are gone; but Christ would never leave you, nor forsake you, (Heb. 13:5).

6. Is it not great folly to love that which may prove a hindrance to your everlasting happiness, and not Him who is the purchaser and the promoter of it? To love that which is often hurtful to the owners, and always hurtful to the over-lovers of it, and not him who never did his lover harm, but good? "There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt," (Eccl. 5:13). This Solomon had seen, and many have seen; but that Christ should hurt any man who hath him for his own, was never seen. Riches are thick clay and clogs to the minds of men, and keep them down to earth, that they cannot rise to heaven, nor get so high while they live, nor their souls when their bodies die, that they make salvation exceedingly difficult: "Then said Jesus to his disciples, Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," (Mat. 19:23, 24). But to love riches, and not Christ, while a man doth so, doth not make salvation only hard, but impossible; but the love of Christ makes salvation not only possible, but certain and easy.

7. Is it not great folly to love that which cannot comfort you at death, and not love Christ, who both can and would? Love what ye will besides Christ, and not Christ, it cannot be a stay to your departing souls; what will ye look to at death for comfort—your riches? why, ye are going from them, with a heart full of love to them; to love them and yet must leave them, to leave them in loving of them, will torment and vex you, not support and comfort you. To pleasures that ye loved? when ye lie dying, they are fled, and past, and gone. To your friends? when ye are dying, ye are taking your last leave of them. To Christ? alas! him ye never loved, and the thoughts of that will be a sting more painful than the sting of death.

V. Can ye do any thing less than love Christ, or can ye do any thing more? Is it not a small thing that Christ should have your love, for all those great things ye have, and hope to have by Christ? And yet Christ stands upon your love as greatest of all, and all without love is nothing. If Christ had asked you to lay down your life for him, had he required more from you than he himself hath done for you: had he called you to give your bodies to be burned for him, should ye not have done it? How much more when he saith, Let your hearts but burn in love unto me, when that burning will not be painful, but delightful! When Naaman came to the prophet to be cleansed of his leprosy, being directed to go and wash in Jordan, and he should be clean, in wrath he went away; but his servant came to him and said, "My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather, then, when he saith unto thee, Wash, and be clean?" (2 Kings 5:13). If Christ had required some great thing, that thou mightest escape great torments, and be partaker of great salvation, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather, then, when he saith, Love me, and be saved? When you have received great kindness from a friend whom you cannot requite, yet you say, I cannot do less than love him: yet this small thing is more in Christ's account than all without this. You pray to him, but to love him is more; a heart full of love is more to Christ than a thousand prayers, full of the most eloquent expressions, without love. You hear his word, but to love him is more. You might suffer for him, but to have love to him is more. Should you give all your goods to the poor, and your body to the fire for him, to give your heart and love to him is still more. And, indeed, except all the former proceed from love, and are accompanied with it, they are not pleasing to Christ, nor profitable to your salvation (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

VI. Will you love that which you might easily love too much, and not Christ, whom you can never over-love? You might love your riches, your relations, your pleasures, yourself; your liberty, your life, too much. In these your love might soon exceed, and transgress the bounds; and it is hard not to exceed, but to keep within bounds. And indeed, so much love as you give to these more than to Christ, is too much; but could you love Christ with as much love as all the saints in heaven love him, it would not be too much for him, if you were able to bear it. Many have complained they loved Christ too little, but never any that he had too much of their love. God doth blame you, and conscience doth accuse you, for your great love to things below; but neither God nor conscience, for the highest degrees of love to Christ, and things that are above.

VII. Can you love yourselves truly, and not love the Lord Jesus sincerely? There is a self-love which is inconsistent with the love of Christ; and there is a self-love which is the best, that no man hath but he that loveth Christ. Doth that man love himself indeed, who regards not the salvation of his soul? who ruins himself, and damns

himself, and shuts himself out of heaven? Doth that man love himself indeed, who exposes himself to the wrath of God, to the damnation of hell, and to banishment from the glorious presence of the blessed God? all which a man brings upon himself for want of love to Jesus Christ. If then you will love yourself truly, you must love Christ sincerely.

VIII. Are not all the duties of religion tedious to you, for want of love to Christ? Do you find it a burden to pray? a burden to hear or read the word of God? Is it a burden to you to meditate upon God and Christ, and things above? It is all for want of love to Christ; for love makes hard things easy, and heavy labour to be light.

IX. Doth any thing make you more like to God than to love Christ? Do you not in this most resemble God? Do you believe in Christ? So doth not God. Do you trust in Christ for life and salvation? So doth not God. Do you obey the commandments of Christ? God hath no superior to command him. But do you love Christ? So doth God: "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands" (John 3:35; 5:20).

X. Might you return to God and Christ like for like, in any thing but in love? or in any thing carry it towards God, as God doth towards you? If God be angry with you, might you be angry with God? If God withdraw comfort from you, might you withhold duty from God? If he rebuke you, might you rebuke him? If he be displeased with you, might you be displeased with him? Would not all this be your sin, and perverseness of heart towards him? But if he love you, you may and ought to love him. If he hath set his heart upon you, your duty is to set your heart on him.

XI. Can you hope for salvation by him, without sincere affection to him? Or who bids you hope for any such thing? Can you have the face to expect such great things by, through, and from Christ, as pardon of all your sins, deliverance from hell, the happiness of heaven, and yet not love him? Do you hope for eternal life by Christ? I know you do; might not Christ then expect love from you, when you expect life by Christ? As you would have life by Christ, let Christ have love from you, or else your expectation of life will be disappointed, and end in death without end.

XII. Dare you die without love to Christ? Dare you, can you leave this world with a quiet mind, if you love not Christ? No, surely, except you die as blind as you were born. What think you when you come to be sick, and when you come to die, will it not be a cut to your heart, to think—I have lived twenty, forty years, but I never loved Christ? Now must I go to appear before him whom I never loved. Why not love him while you live in health, as well as wish you had loved him when health is gone, and sickness come? when life is going as fast as death is coming?

XIII. Is not your love Christ's due? Do you not owe it to him? Is it not due to him by virtue of creation? Did not he give your being to you? By virtue of redemption, when you were worse than nothing, did not he lay down his soul, his life, his blood, as a price for your ransom? By virtue of preservation, hath not Christ kept you out of the grave and hell unto this day? Justice would have hewn thee down, and wrath would have condemned thee long ago; and who hath procured a reprieve for thee but Christ? That thou art on this side the torments of the damned, not past praying, and hearing, and hoping, is all through Christ's procuring for thee longer time. By virtue of provision, which Christ maketh for thee, thou wouldst not have had a rag to thy back, nor a morsel for thy mouth, nor sleep in thine eyes, if Christ had not bought, and by purchase procured for thee what thou hast. Thy love is due to Christ by virtue of command, whereby thou art obliged and bound to give it to him, and shalt be accounted a transgressor, and a great one too, if thou dost withhold it from him.

If it be due so many ways, what injustice will it be in thee to deny to Christ that which is his due? Art thou not careful to give to every one their own? And is it not an ease to thy mind, that though thou art not rich, yet thou hast to give every one his due? Dost thou not trade, work, cark, and care, to give all their own, and shall Christ be the only person to whom thou wilt be unjust? If thou hast not enough to satisfy all thy creditors, yet of one, whom thou lovest and bearest more respect unto, thou sayest, If it please God, such a one shall lose nothing by me. Poor sinner! wilt thou say, Though I cannot do what I should, yet Christ shall not be so far a loser by me, as not to have my heart and love. Look to it that he do not; for if he do, thou wilt lose thy soul; and then who will be the greatest loser?

XIV. Is it not great condescension in Christ, that he will so kindly accept of thy love? One so great, accept of the love of one so mean? One so holy, accept the love of one that is so sinful? One so glorious, of one so vile? Do great men value the love of beggars? or princes the love of peasants? Would a man of great birth and estate give leave to one clothed in rags to love him in order to marriage? Or would he not scorn and reject both the person and her love? Methinks, considering what Christ is, and what thou art, thou shouldst say, If Christ will give me leave, I will love him. Give thee leave! Not only so, but gives thee command, and that upon pain and peril of everlasting damnation; if thou dost not, he doth give thee leave and charge to love him, but no leave to live without love to him,

though for thy long refusal he might justly leave thee to live without love to him.

XV. Should you ever have any cause or reason to be ashamed of your love to Christ? Is not the time coming, and the day hastening, when covetous men shall be ashamed of their loving the world, and voluptuous men ashamed of loving their pleasures, and the ambitious of their honours; but the time will never come, the day will never be, that a gracious soul shall be ashamed of his sincere love to Jesus Christ. For what is said of hope, is true of love, it "maketh not ashamed," (Rom. 5:5): but as all sin is matter of shame, "What fruit have ye of those things of which ye are now ashamed?" (Rom. 6:21), so especially the lovers of sin shall be ashamed that they loved not Christ. For is it not a horrid shame, that a rational creature should be such a sot as to love sin which is most loathsome, and not love Christ who is most lovely? to love deformity, and not beauty? a real evil under the notion, and appearance, and paint, of a seeming good, and not a Christ who is a real good, without the appearance of the least evil? Oh shame, shame! I am ashamed that sin should have such esteem, and Christ such great contempt put upon him; but shame shall ere long confound these now shameless wretches, when they shall cry out, We are ashamed that we loved profits, and not Christ; house, lands, lusts, and not Christ. This is the confusion of our faces, and shame doth cover us, that we should be so foolish, and so blind, that we had not sense, nor reason, to distinguish betwixt the greatest and most lovely good, and the greatest and most odious evil.

XVI. Is there any love so profitable as the love of Christ? Gain draweth love; by the love of other things more than Christ, you will lose more than you gain. By such love, God, Christ, heaven, and your own soul, will be for ever lost; and should your gains of the world be proportionable to your love of the world, yea, and exceed it, to the gaining of the whole world to yourself, which never man yet did, your gain would prove your loss; and when you come to cast up your account at death or judgment, you will find yourself cast much behind-hand, because from God's face and favour: "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26). But by the loving of Christ you shall have gain, that no man can value, no mind can estimate, no arithmetician, by all his numbers and figures, can compute; even pardon of innumerable sins, the favour of an infinite God, deliverance from inconceivable torments, possession of endless life, and more than I, or any man, can describe or comprehend.

XVII. Is there any love so universally necessary, as the love of Christ? One man loves one thing, and a second another, and a third another, but there is no necessity that all men should love any one thing but Christ, and things appertaining to our having and enjoying him; and love to Christ is necessary for poor and rich, for great and small, for noble and ignoble, for learned and unlearned, for bond and free. O then, what doings are these that that love which is necessary, not only for the most, but for all, should be neglected not only by the most, but almost comparatively by all?

XVIII. Do not you want one great help against the temptations of Satan, while you are void of love to Christ? Is not Satan your enemy? Is not your heart forward to yield to him? Doth it not concern you to resist him, when, if you yield, you deserve to die? But this love would garrison your hearts, fortify your souls, make you courageous and resolute against all the batteries of Satan, assaults of sin, and watchful against the allurements and ambushments of the world, and that you would say, Shall I offend my dearest Lord? Shall I displease him who hath had such good pleasure to do me such good, such everlasting good? Oh! how can I do this or that great evil, and sin against him whom I do love! For do you not find that love forbids, and exceedingly restrains, from grieving, offending, or wronging him whom you do entirely love?

XIX. Will you ever be able to hold your profession of Christ without sincere love unto him? When trials come, will not such as have no saving love to Christ, turn their backs upon him? Will they that love riches, ease, liberty, honours, life, or any thing, more than Christ, leave, lose, lay down, these for Christ? What you love most, will you not endeavour to keep longest? These must be harboured, but Christ then shall be abandoned (Matt. 19:21, 22), but if you have not that love which will keep you stedfast and constant in suffering for Christ on earth, for want of that love you shall suffer eternally in hell.

XX. Is it not possible for you to set your love upon Christ? Is it not attainable? Devils cannot love him, but you can. Damned souls cannot love him, but you can if you would; for have you not the means to help you to love him? Is not he preached to you? Is not the Spirit striving with you? Will you say you cannot love him, though you would! That I utterly deny, for if you were really willing to love him, you could love him; nay, if you do unfeignedly will to love him, you do love him, for what is willing but loving? And what hinders you from loving, but your not willing to love him? Will you say, you want power? What power do you mean? The natural faculty or power of the will? That you have; how else do you will any thing you do? Will you say you want a power of willing to love Christ? What is that, but that you are unwilling to love him? And if you cannot, because you will not, the more you plead your

cannot, the more you aggravate your will not. A natural power God hath given you, that is a will; if you lie under a moral impotency, that is your sin; and what is this moral cannot or impotency, but the averseness of the will from Christ? Therefore, though without the powerful workings of the grace and Spirit of God, you cannot love Christ sincerely, yet this cannot is your will not, for if by the grace of God you were enabled to will, you could, and if you were as willing to love Christ, as some now are, who once were as unwilling as now you are, you could love him as well as they. Why should you stand off, and say, If it were possible for me to love Christ, I would? How! possible! What! is there no difference betwixt you and a devil? betwixt you and the damned in hell? You can love the world; can you do that? You can love yourself; can you do that? Yes. And I suppose you can love sin too, can you not? To your grief and your shame, we find it: but why can you love the world, and self, and sin? Is it not because you will? Do you do it against your will? I wish you did, then there might be more hopes you would be persuaded to love Christ. You can and do love sin, because you are willing; have but as great willingness to love Christ, as the world and sin, and then it may be said, not only that you can, but do love Christ. However, though I am no assertor of the liberty and power of the will in things supernatural, nor an opposer of the necessity of the workings of the Spirit, to enable a sinner to love Christ, yet it is most manifest that your unwillingness is the hindrance of such love, and this unwillingness is your weakness; since then your unwillingness (certainly by grace) might be removed, your love is possible, therefore cease not till it be actual.

Are ye at length convinced of the necessity of love to Christ? and are ye at length persuaded to seek it, and willing to get love to him?

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