

Other by grace! If you mean the former, then I say you argue that one man has Christ's love as much as another—Judas as much as John.

But you will not say that He loves all men alike—now, why does He love the Church more than the world! It is because He is the father of their spiritual life as saints? Why, we learn that He loved them before they became saints—yea, before they were born. *And why?* Who can tell me? Because, says one, He chose them. Do you mean to tell me that His love followed His choice—that His choice of them was the cause of His love to them? Why both love and choice are equally from all eternity! What caused His love, I say? You cannot tell, and perhaps shall never know it. I believe everything about God Himself to be unsearchable. None can measure His strength, fathom His knowledge, conceive His infinity, calculate His age, explain His nature, or understand His heart.

Augustine was walking one morning by the sea-shore, meditating on the doctrine of the Trinity. Three holy persons, thought he, in the Godhead, equal in wisdom, equal in power, and equal in glory; yet not three Gods—only one! And as he tried in vain to understand it, he saw before him on the shore a little child, holding in its hand a coloured sea-shell, scooping a hole in the sand, running to the waves, filling it with water, returning to the hole, and emptying it. "What are you doing, child?" said Augustine. "I am going," said the child, "to pour the sea into this hole." Ah, thought Augustine, it is the very thing I have been trying to do—standing on the shore of time, by the ocean of the infinite and eternal Godhead, and trying to comprehend that Godhead with my little mind! And the love of Jesus is such an unsearchable ocean, without bottom or bounds,—therefore wonder and adore, but think not to discover the cause of the love of Christ, which "passeth knowledge."

II. Let me ask you, in the second place, Can you ever know the *beginning* of the love of Jesus? If you think you can, just try to find it out. You may trace back the love of Jesus for eighteen hundred years, to the cross of Calvary, and say, "Then He first loved us," But, no; He

loved us before then! You may trace it back six thousand years, to the time when He walked with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, and say, "Then He first loved us." But we tell you He loved us before then! You may trace back His love, from age to age, to the time when first, moving in darkness over the face of the silent deep, He spake those words which called from the womb of night the newborn day, and say, "Then He first loved us." But we tell you He loved us before then! You may then trace back the love of the Lord Jesus Christ, by a stretch of thought, to that time when in heaven He formed the very first living angel, and say, "Then He first loved us." But we tell you He loved us before then! Now you cannot go further back than that; you have no data for doing so. You do not know what was before that. What can you do! Who shall tell me now the beginning of the love of Jesus Christ?

This golden vein of Christ's love goes down so deep, that were you to dig into gone-by ages for ever you could not reach the bottom! I solemnly believe it—this mighty river of the love of Christ, ere it rolled through sixty centuries, rose among the hills of heaven, flowing from that deep fountain the heart of God, having been embosomed there who can tell how long! Surely none. For as you can never know the beginning of eternity, so you can never know the beginning of the love of Christ, which was from eternity! For one good reason you can never know its beginning—it never had a beginning! for it is written, "I have loved thee with an EVERLASTING love, therefore with cords of loving-kindness have I drawn thee."

III. Shall we be more successful in discovering the *greatness* of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ to sinners? Never! for in this, too, it "passeth knowledge." Often in climbing a high mountain, the higher you get, the higher the mountain seems to rise. You reach a lofty ridge, and lo, a gigantic stretch of still higher crags looms down upon you. You climb the winding path up the rough side to the top, and lo, the snow-white peaks still soar up above you. You ascend, and stand at last far up in heaven on a higher reach, and lo, the lonely summit still looks down upon