

word." Besides, it is impossible to have that common faith, and common feeling, which are necessarily implied in being disciples of Christ, without having this mutual affection. It is obvious that the man who is destitute of this peculiar affection to Christians as Christians, is not—cannot be—himself a Christian.

And the second principle implied in our Lord's words—that none but Christ's disciples are possessed of this affection—is no less obviously true. A worldly man, an unbeliever, may respect a genuine Christian—he may be constrained to do so; he may even love him on account of his naturally amiable qualities, or of the natural relation in which he stands to him, or of the advantages he derives from him; but he does not, he cannot, love him as a Christian. What is peculiarly Christian in his character, is not, cannot be, to him an object of affection. He loves him, not for, but notwithstanding, his Christianity. It is only those who are taught of God that *can* love the brethren as the Master requires them to be loved, even as he himself loved them—with a cordial regard to the image of God appearing in them—with a self-denying, self-sacrificing love. Herod respected John; but, had he loved him for his holiness, he would have abandoned his paramour, instead of shutting up his faithful reprove in prison. It is a certain proof that a man has passed from death to life, if he really loves the brethren.

This distinctive affection towards genuine Christians is something that *ought* not to be concealed; something, indeed, that *cannot* be concealed. Love is an active principle; and love to the brethren shows itself in acts of kindness to the brethren. True Christians associate together, in a way in which they do not associate with the men of the world. When duty calls, they associate with worldly men; but when they are "let go, they seek their own company;" and while they "do good to all men, as they have opportunity," they especially abound in offices of kindness to those "who are of the household of faith." It is the will of their Lord that it should be so. He by no means wishes them "to do their good works before men, to be seen of the men;" but he does wish their light, in doing good to the brethren, "so to shine before men, as that they, seeing their good works, may glorify their Father who is in heaven." In the earliest and best age of Christianity, the words of our Lord were very remarkably verified. It was then a common expression among the heathen, "See how these Christians love one another, and how ready they are to die for each other!" The profane Lucian scoffingly says of the Christians of his time, "Their Lawgiver has persuaded them that they are all brethren;" and another heathen remarks, that "Christians love one another before they are acquainted, if they but know that they are Christians."

We have great cause to lament that the love of Christians is by no means so ardent, and therefore by no means so visible, as it was in the primitive age. It has waxed cold; and in the church losing its great ornament, the world is deprived of one principal means of its conversion. The infidelity of the world is chargeable, to a considerable degree, on professed believers, failing to exhibit the true character of the religion of Christ, as the religion of love. When the true followers of Jesus Christ are visibly of one mind and one heart, the world will be constrained to believe, that the Father hath sent the Son. Alas! how do many of us give the lie to our profession, and shut up reflecting worldly men to one or other of the conclusions, either that we are not Christians, or if we are, that there is no such power in the doctrine and law of Christ as their author ascribes to them.

An important question, of a practical kind, naturally rises out of these illustrations. Are we obeying the new commandment of our Lord? Are we giving this proof of our discipleship to ourselves, to the church, to the world? Do we love the brethren, do we love Christians as Christians? Do we love them from their relation and likeness to God our Father, and Jesus Christ, their elder brother. Do we cordially esteem them? Do we affectionately love them? Do we do them good as we have opportunity? Do we seek opportunity to do them good? Happy are those who can intelligently, honestly, reply to these questions in the affirmative. They have "passed from death to life." This love of the brethren,