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## The Love of Christ

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The consensus of modern thought is to the effect that man is not so bad as formerly supposed, that he is not deliberately wicked but simply unfortunately circumstanced, that he has in him all redemptive possibilities and only needs enlightenment, environment, and plenty of time for the processes of evolution. And God, we are assured, is not so bad as the old theologians represented Him. He is no horrid Moloch delighting in blood but a tender-hearted Father who is only too glad to pardon and to reinstate repentant prodigals.

And yet in the face of this I make bold to affirm that the great overmastering purpose of Christ's coming to earth was not to lead a life that would give inspiration, but to die an atoning death that would make possible salvation. I do, indeed, believe that there are in man redemptive possibilities. If there were not God Himself would not redeem him. Thank God he is not hopelessly lost like the devil and his angels. But if the scriptures teach anything, they teach the unity of the human race, and therein science itself concurs. The scriptures teach that there was a first human pair, and so does science, for, as man was not always here, even if the evolutionist be right, there must have been a first pair of creatures that deserved to be denominated human. And as they must have had names of some sort, I can see no earthly objection to calling this great pair Adam and Eve.

The scriptures disclose that this first pair sinned against God. And as sin is here and man has had a beginning, I see no sort of objection to the kind of beginning set forth in Genesis, which is God's account of beginnings. The scriptures declare that God threatened death as the penalty of sin, and that this death was not mere dissolution of the body, but something infinitely darker, deeper and dreadfuller.

Now, man can make a law and attach to it a penalty, and then when the law is violated he can waive the penalty. But God cannot. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? And shall He not keep the bond that has gone forth from His mouth? Let God be true and every man a liar."

Here, then, was the tremendous problem of the universe. How could God be just and justify the ungodly? How could He declare what He would do in the case of disobedience and then fail to do what He had declared? Man can play fast and loose with justice and truth, but not the righteous Governor of the universe.

It was not that there was lack of love in the great Father of the everlasting Father, but there was a difficulty in the inexorable principles of moral government, a difficulty as high as heaven and deep as hell. That difficulty was met in the scheme of redemption. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." I pretend not to fathom the depths of the doctrine of the atonement. The angels desire to look into these things, and are not able. We can only adoringly cry with Paul: "Oh, the depths!"

### The Old Theology.

Call this, contemptuously, the old theology, if you please. We plead guilty to the indictment. It is old—as old as the first promise which told of the bruised and bleeding heel of the seed of woman; as old as Abel's blood-stained altar; as old as the brazen serpent uplifted by the hand of Moses, and symbolic of Christ's uplifting on the cross. And if it be said that this old theology is out of date and cannot stand the focussed light of the twentieth century, I answer that John had a vision of the closing age of human history and of the heaven of light and glory lying beyond for the saints of God, and he tells us that, looking up, he saw in the midst of the throne, where all the light of all time and of all eternity and of all the universe is focussed, "a lamb as it had been slain," the very Lamb that died on Calvary's sacrificial altar. And with that sight set forth

in that light I dare to say before God and man, that the great fact of the gospel is the death of Christ.

The great motive of the gospel is the love of Christ, by which I mean not our love to Christ, but Christ's love to us. Blink it as much as you may the love of God is not indigenous in the soul of man. There is an awfulness in His holiness from which sinful human nature instinctively recoils. And there is a dreadfulness in His almightiness as it bears down upon us in His providence that stirs all the serpent's venom in us. He not only distils the dewdrops but pets the earth with hailstones. He not only sends the sweet south wind but the vengeful cyclone. Not only sunbeams but thunderbolts, not only the glow of health but the pallor of disease and the appalling shadow of death. And men forget the dewdrops and the zephyrs and the sunbeams, and the throbs and thrills of joyous life and think only of the thunderbolts and cyclones, and the breaking heartstrings by the bedside of the dying and the coffin of the dead. And so naturally enough, and yet insistently enough, they shake their puny fists in the face of the Almighty and ask: "Why hast thou dealt with me thus?"

### The Love of God.

Now Christ's purpose in coming to this sin-cursed world was first of all, by His atoning death not to soften God's hurt, but to open the sluiceways by which the pent-up love of God could flush all the channels of our lives, and secondly to disabuse the minds of men of their vicious misconception of God's feeling toward them. He walked the earth with human feet, with hands full of blessing and eyes full of tears, comforting the sorrowful and saving the lost, and at last pouring out His soul into death upon the cross and by His life of beneficence and His vicarious death on Calvary proclaimed to every sin-blinded soul that "God so loved the world." And thus God shone into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of His glory in the grace of Jesus Christ. I have heard of an ill-starred wretch who had been separated from his wife and children and who had lost his fortune and his reason beside, but whose wife across the seas had a heart that still throbbled for him with a deathless love, and she sent him a picture of herself and her little ones grouped about her, and when it was handed to the supposedly hopeless lunatic, he gazed at it steadily for a moment, then hugged it to his bosom, then passionately kissed it and then eagerly cried "My blessed wife! My blessed babies! Where are they? Bring me to them, right away." And reason again was on the throne, and the light of love now beamed in the eyes where awhile ago there was a gleam of madness. Even so, beholding as in mirror the glory of God, which is nothing other than the love of God as it beams in the face of Jesus Christ, "we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord." Many motives appeal to man to lure him to enter upon a Christian life. Sometimes it is the fear of coming wrath as the Law sounds its stern alarm in his ears. Sometimes the hope of the betterment of earthly conditions as he listens to the pleasing assurance that godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come. And so he cries with one of old, "O, satisfy us with Thy mercy that we may rejoice and be glad all our days." While others still have been brought to realize that it is not all of life to live are attracted by the promise of palms of victory and crowns of glory, and an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away in a world of ineffable splendor lying beyond the bounds of time and sense.

### The Constraining Love.

These motives have their place and use, but they are utterly insufficient to lift a sin-sodden soul out of the depths of the horrible pit into which sin has plunged up to the serene heights of real holiness and happiness. Such motives may lead men to make general professions of religion, but all of them combined could never make a Christian. Only the constraining love of Christ can do that. And I beg you to notice that that

word "constrain" is a very large word. It means for one thing an effectual curb for all those infernal propensities that, like hellhounds, are tugging at their leashes, eager to tear loose and make home. What leashes are strong enough to hold them? All sorts of fetters had been tried on the demoniac of Gadara, but he shook them off like flax touched with fire. Nothing could tame him till Jesus transfixed him with a look of love, and calmed him with a word of power. Who of us has not known men that seemed to be devil-possessed, lost to every generous impulse, impervious to every appeal, steeped to the lips in loathsome sin, who were afterwards lifted to the dignity and stability of emancipated manhood, and who if asked the secret of the wondrous change, would rejoicingly answer, "The love of Christ constraineth me."

But that word constrain not only means an effectual curb but a mighty spur as well. It is not enough for one to be brought out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, and to have his feet set upon a rock, he must be set a-going. The Psalmist says: "He hath established my goings." The keynote of the Great Lord's mission is "Go." Jesus says, "I have chosen you and ordained you that ye should go." Go at once—go not only when the way leads through green pastures, but when deserts are to be crossed and mountains to be climbed, and lives to be saved, and when poverty, persecution, death itself are to be braved and borne. What can brace one for such a life and for such a death? Let Paul the Apostle who encountered all this declare it, and his secret is: "The love of Christ constraineth us." We hear much talk of a new revival—the new revival that is most to be craved is a revival of the old love. Not more scholastics in our pulpits, nor more advanced thinkers, but more men all aglow with the constraining love of Christ. And in our churches not more machinery, for even now, we have wheels upon wheels surpassing anything that Ezekiel ever dreamed of, but somehow the wheels are stalled for the lack of such fire as in his vision! Ezekiel saw between the wheels, and that fire is nothing other than the constraining love of Jesus Christ.

A somewhat novel plan for dealing with offenders under twelve years of age is to be laid before the New York Legislature. A Bill will be offered providing for the establishment of a special court for the trial of youthful offenders. The judges shall be married women, preference being given to those who are mothers.

With this issue of this paper we begin our new serial, "Crusing for the Cross." Which we believe will interest all our readers. It is a story that shows what the renewing grace of God can do with us, and by those who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. We are careful to select such stories for this paper as will furnish our young people with fascinating reading concerning some typical character whose course of life inspire them with righteous principles, and will be safe for them to imitate, and will cultivate in them a relish for useful moral reading matter instead of the yellow covered sensational and demoralizing novels that are filling too many of our homes. Young people will read stories, and if we do not give them good ones, they read bad ones. Now, friends is a good time to subscribe for "THE HOME MISSION JOURNAL," so as to get this story from the first of it. You can have the paper from the first one in this month to the end of this year for 30 cents. We will have on hand copies from this date to supply any one with them, who may send us their name and address. And will you who are in arrears for the paper, please remit the payment to us. We need twenty-five dollars every month to keep the paper out of debt. Some to whom we have sent the paper marked (free) would not take it that way, and have sent us pay for it. They will accept our thanks. Address J. H. Hughes, Cunard St. North End, St. John, N. B.