

and before his angels, the humblest of those who have looked unto Him.

*To Jesus, and not to our brethren,* not even to the best among them and the most beloved. In following a man we run the risk of going wrong; in following Jesus we are certain never to be led astray. Besides, by putting a man between Jesus and ourselves, it happens insensibly, that the man increases and Christ decreases; eventually we no longer know how to find Jesus when we cannot find the man, and if he should happen to fail us, everything fails. Whereas, if Jesus stands between us and our most intimate friend, our attachment to man will be at once less direct and more deep, less impassioned and more tender, less necessary and more useful,—a channel of rich blessing in the hands of God when it pleases Him to make use of it, and whose absence will be a blessing still, when it pleases God to dispense with it in order to draw us all the closer to the only friend from whom “neither life nor death”<sup>\*</sup> can separate us.

*To Jesus, and not to his enemies and ours.* Instead of hating and dreading them, we shall then know how to love and conquer them.

*To Jesus, and not the obstacles which occur on our path.* The moment we stop to consider these, they astonish us, they unnerve us, they cast us down, incapable as we are of comprehending either the reason for which they are permitted, or the means by which we can overcome them. The apostle sank as soon as he began to look at the waves tossed by the tempest; it was while he looked unto Jesus that he walked on the waves as on a rock.<sup>†</sup> The more difficult our task, the more fearful our temptations, the more important it is that we should look only to Jesus.

*To Jesus, and not to our afflictions,* in order to calculate their number, to

estimate their weight, to find, it may be, I know not what strange satisfaction in tasting their bitterness to the full. Apart from Jesus, affliction does not sanctify, it hardens or it crushes. It produces not patience, but rebellion; not sympathy, but selfishness; not hope,<sup>\*</sup> but despair. It is only under the shadow of His cross that we can take the just measure of our own, can accept it daily from his hand, can bear it with love, with thankfulness, with joy, and find in it a source of blessing for ourselves and others.

*To Jesus, and not to the dearest, to the most legitimate of our earthly joys,* lest we should be so captivated that they shall hide from our sight the very hand that gives them to us. Looking to Him first of all, we shall receive from Him those benefits, a thousandfold more precious, because we shall owe them to his goodness, trust them to his keeping, enjoy them in his fellowship, and use them to his glory.

*To Jesus, and not to the instruments, whatever they may be, of his dispensations towards us.* Beyond men, beyond circumstances, beyond the thousand causes so justly called “second,” let us reach back to the first cause—his will; to the source of that will itself—his love. Then our gratitude, without being less lively towards those who do us good, will not stop at them; then in the day of trial, under the most unexpected, the most mysterious, the most overwhelming affliction, we shall be able to say with the Psalmist, “I was dumb, and I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it,”<sup>†</sup> and in the silence of our uncomplaining grief the heavenly voice will softly answer, “What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.”<sup>‡</sup>

*To Jesus, and not the interests of our cause, of our party, of our church,*

<sup>\*</sup>Rom. viii. 38, 39.

<sup>†</sup>Matt. xiv. 29, 30.

<sup>\*</sup>Rom. v. 3-5. <sup>†</sup>Ps. xxxix. 9. <sup>‡</sup>John xiii. 7.