

The Great Love.

ADDRESS BY REV. CHARLES STANFORD, D. D.

"God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. . . . By grace ye are saved."—Eph. ii: 4, 5.

Let the children know how rich their Father is. "If children," if, if, if children, "then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." God is rich—rich in power—power to create, power to regenerate, the power that holds itself back, the power that balances, the power that guides—all power belongs to our Father. And if it were not so, it would be downright insanity for any one of us to go to China with the Gospel. . . . Two hundred years ago, a missionary looked towards China and said, "O rock, rock, rock, when wilt thou open?" And the mightiest of the sons of men, in himself, can no more stir China than a fly can stir a rock. But our God is rich in power, "power belongeth unto God." And rich in life. The world is full of life; life crowds every water-drop in the millions of water-drops; life crowds every leaf in infinite forests; and that life of the insect, life of the tree, human life, angelic life, archangelic life, the life of grace, the life that thinks, the life that prays, the life that loves, the life that works, the life of glory, the life that lives, burns, and triumphs round the throne—all that is His, no life worth the name, no real life without God our Father. Rich in beauty—not beauty for show, not beauty in reserve, not beauty for men to look at, and for God to make the most of, but God is rich in beauty, though He flings it about in irregular, infinite magnificence. Go to the spot where the prairies are all in flower to-day and to-morrow, and on and on you travel through beauty, sheets of beauty, rippling rivers of beauty, billowy seas of beauty, down the tossing cataracts of beauty. It is God's, He gives it, and gives it, and gives it, and is ever giving, and never has less to give.

But the point is now, with these memorials speaking to us—the thing I want to feel, and for you to feel, is that our God is "rich in mercy"—rich in mercy. We can witness to His praise that He is rich in mercy. Ages ago a saint looked up to the ranks of heaven's blest inhabitants and said, "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens." What would he say now? But we have personally felt it, we know it. If our God delights to hear the publican's prayer, oh! how beautiful it would be to hear the Pharisee cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Some of us have tried it; we thought too much of ourselves once; we are crushed now; we have learned a lesson at the footstool; we know what mercy is; we should have been lost without it. But as soon as we were saved we found that we had been saved by something besides and beyond mercy—"God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love"—His great love—"wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in sins." It seems impossible that God should have loved us, it seems impossible that He should love us now, but He sees us in Christ Jesus, and He sees His own life in us, and sees the infinite perspective. He loved us before His work in us had created an incipient loveliness, even a prophetic purity, while we were dead in sins. I find it very difficult to love a man who is dead to me, who is alive to everybody else, whose faculties are all alive to others, but who is dead to me, dead in eye, dead in ear, dead in hand and foot, dead in heart; but when we were like that to God, God loved us, loved us out of it, loved us into life. He gave Himself away in the great atoning sacrifice, and He came down to us when we were sunk in a very sink, and He lifted us out of it, saved us from the double death. Love explains the cross, but who can explain the love?

This year there was found amongst some old English manuscripts, one that was written by some unknown scribe of antiquity on the lid of a book, representing what Christ says through the cross to the sinner—

My blood so red,
For thee was shed;
Come home again, Come home again;
My own sweetheart, Come home again.
You have gone astray,
In the downward way;
Come home again, Come home again.

And we have had our hearts broken by that heart-breaking cross. We heard that effectual call. We know that God loves us with a great love. Brethren, we need not to remind one another about it, for sometimes we feel that it cannot be true. We are such poor common-place Christians; we are ashamed of ourselves, ashamed of

our dull average, of our miserable standing still. Can God love us? Such poor specimens of Christianity, can God love us? Yes, He can, for He loved us when we were quite dead, He did indeed, He loved us when we were dead, and made us live again. So all you who feel so ashamed and so cold, come back:—"Return, ye backsliding children." Let each child take it for granted that his Father loves him. Look at the cross, and doubt it if you can. Let each child come as a child that has been long away from home; let each child come and take the child's place; and let each child climb to the child's nest, the Father's arms, to-night.

And now this is brought all before us by these memorials. Yield yourself to the spirit of the hour; pray, pray that Christ's love, God's love in Christ, may now be real to you. It is no fancy, it is no theory—it is reality; yield yourself to it; be carried away with the river of it; oh, believe it, believe it, just now. Read when you get home Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, right through; it is full of a sense of the wonderful love, and it goes forth so that he does not know how to bear himself. He talks about God's riches of grace, riches of love, riches of glory, till he is obliged to make all his chapters chapters of superlatives. Earthly words were not made to utter such heavenly thoughts. He tried in vain to pour out through them his impetuous grief and passionate adoration called forth by the sense of the wonderful love speaking through the cross. It seems as if the earthly vessel must break down with the weight of the heavenly treasure. Luke's pen races along the page, Paul makes him out of breath with his rapid rushing thoughts about God's love. I want to feel like that to-night. Sometimes we must feel like that, we must make time for that, we London men; we must not in the morning just leave enough time to run and catch the train, there must be time for calm thought, and calm reading, and calm prayer. We have such a time now. There is nothing speaks so straight to the heart about love as this appointment does, so I step back now, and let that speak, let that speak. The very look at it, if we are prepared to look in the right way, wakes up thoughts too deep for words. We want the passionate silence. Friends may speak yet even to help that inward silence, but the most impressive, the most melting, and pathetic language is a language without words, the language of the Lord's Supper. God bless this service to every heart.

Obituary.—Mrs. George DeWitt.

The writer having been the pastor of the estimable Christian woman just named for nearly twenty years, and therefore might be considered better acquainted with her experience and character, ventures, at the request of Dr. DeWitt, her mother and her late pastor, Rev. I. J. Skinner, to prepare this obituary notice of one so worthy of remembrance. Her father, the late Wm. H. Chipman, was one of the best Christians and Deacons it has been my privilege to know. In the parental home, it was a true Christian one—Miss Chipman received a careful and judicious training. In such a home where the Bible was enthroned, and prayer opened and closed the day—where intelligence, piety and cheerfulness shone out with no common lustre, there was something very beautiful and impressive; and this youth was early affected by the influences of home and the Christian ministry.

While attending school at Nictaux she experienced the power of saving grace, and gave her heart to Christ, was baptized by the late Rev. W. G. Parker, then in the full tide of a glorious revival. After a ministry of great usefulness, this faithful man of God was, a short time since, called suddenly from earth to his eternal home and reward.

On returning to Bridgetown, Miss Chipman united with the church of which the writer was pastor, and immediately entered on an earnest, active course of Christian work and progress. She exhibited intense interest in the study of the Scriptures, and strong desire for the salvation of souls. The church, the Sabbath School, and the world felt the influence of her spirit, life and testimony.

When on her marriage she left with her husband, Dr. DeWitt, the home of her youth for her new home in Chester, the blessing of her parents, pastor, and the whole people, followed her.

At Chester—one of the most picturesque places in Nova Scotia—this worthy young Christian pursued the same course of Christian life and progress. But after a time disease so wrought on a delicate con-

stitution that the loved sanctuary and work outside had to be given up, and the severe discipline of protracted suffering had to be endured for weeks and months, notwithstanding skill and affection did their utmost to check the malady or allay the pain.

When thus suffering there came to her mind many questions and perplexing doubts as to her spiritual condition, and these led to deep self-examination and much prayer, which, ere long, brought sweet relief and assurance. In a letter written to the church at Chester, Dec. 21, 1878, to be read after her decease, she thus recounts her struggles and the victory:

"Come ye that love the Lord and I will tell you what He has done for my soul." "Those that seek me early shall find me." What precious words! I have proved them true. I was 14 years of age when I first found Christ to be the one altogether lovely, and He has proved faithful to the end, and soon I will be with Him in glory. Bless the Lord and all that is within me, for what He hath done for my soul. I thought I would like to tell you what I have experienced the last few days.

Ever since I have been in a decline I have felt very timid about dying, even up to Monday of this week. I then had an ill turn after going to bed, had I been dying I could not have had a greater struggle for breath. I felt as though I could not die just yet. I had been under a cloud all that day, so that I began to wonder if I was really a child of God, an impression I never had when in health. I felt that I was too unworthy to enter that heavenly home and should I be so happy as to enter there I would be ashamed to look my Saviour in the face. The next day's experience was similar. When I retired at night I was in such bodily distress I could not let my husband leave the house, fearing another ill turn. I resolved to try what prayer would do and asked the Lord to take away my suffering and let me spend a comfortable night, that I would doubt no more, and that it might be a token that I was His child. I called mother and asked her to make the same request and leave me in the dark alone, and told my husband I was sure my prayer would be heard. As I prayed the promises flowed in upon me as fast as I could think; all at once I saw a beautiful calm river lying before me, not a ripple on its surface, resembling the Annapolis river of Wilmot, much wider; each bank was lined with beautiful trees. Across the river stood a form robed in light, such a soft bright light. The surroundings were all illuminated. I saw no face and no hand beckoning me. I heard no voice neither was there any boat to carry me across, but I did not think of these things at that time, so anxious was I to get to him for I felt that he was my Saviour come for me, even me. Soon it faded away and all was dark. The vision is still before me, and ever since I have felt that my cup was running over with happiness. I have given up all earthly things, even my dearest earthly friends, and can leave the world without a tear, and when Jesus calls me I can go. Still I am willing to wait my appointed time and suffer all his will.

Although my sufferings are great and I am very much prostrated, yet I feel that each day brings me nearer heaven and I shall soon be in glory.

Farewell, Mr. Skinner, I trust you have already awaiting you a crown studded with many bright stars, but go to work with great earnestness that many more may be added to it.

Farewell, Christian friends, my voice will not again be heard in this house. My dying charge to you is to wake up out of your sleep and go to work for your Master. Make the fourteenth chapter of John your study and trust implicitly in its precious promises. I wish each to choose one soul to pray for and plead with that soul to seek the Saviour, and the Lord may pour you out a blessing such as was never known in this place.

"If grief in heaven might find a place And shame the worshippers bow down, Who meets the Saviour face to face." "I would be to you a starless crown."

May God bless the Sunday School, the efforts and labors of the teachers. May each work more earnestly to bring souls into the Master's vineyard. May God's blessing rest upon dear sister Jessie Smith who teaches the little ones, who has taken so much pains with my dear little son Stanley; it is my request that she will keep him in her class as long as she possibly can and ever try to lead his young soul to Christ.

Farewell, my dear friends in Christ. Farewell!

HETTIE DEWITT.

The following sketch from Rev. I. J. Skinner is here added:

When sister DeWitt, with her husband, became identified with the church in Chester, she expressed a strong desire to be useful. Accordingly she connected herself with the Sabbath School, where she won the esteem and affection of her class as well as of the School generally. The Conference and prayer-meetings were never neglected when she could attend, and her exercises were of a nature that indicated deep-toned piety, and her communications were often a blessing and comfort to many. She continued faithfully to discharge her Christian duties in the church and Sabbath School until failing health compelled her to retire from the employment which she dearly loved. During her last illness, which was protracted and painful, although generally hopeful, yet she had her seasons

of despondency, and death sometimes seemed a terror to her. But as she approached the dark river, she was favored with bright visions beyond, which dispelled all her fears, and she longed for the hour to come that would release her from suffering, and permit her to pass over to the "other side." So great were her bodily sufferings towards the close, that she sent a message by me to the meeting on Sunday morning, requesting the prayers of the church, that she might be speedily released from her excruciating pains, and permitted to go home to the rest above. That night, (December 29th) about 12 o'clock, she sweetly passed away. She selected two hymns to be sung at her funeral. The 1166th, commencing "Jerusalem my glorious home," etc., and the 1173rd, "On Jordan's stormy banks," etc. She wished no funeral sermon with special reference to herself, but selected a text, Prov. 8: 17, from which she desired a sermon to be preached to the young.

In closing this notice the memory of the writer is busy with the past; the departed was like one brought up in his family, and was accustomed to mingle with his own children as if one of them. With the lights and shadows of our humble parsonage home, the Deacon's daughter was as well acquainted, and as sympathetic as that worthy man himself. With Dr. DeWitt, so deeply bereaved, and with his children, the mother, sister and friends of the departed, we deeply sympathize. But there is comfort in the reflection that God is infinitely wise and good in the removal of His children from earth, and when households are sad at the absence of loved ones, it is a consolation to be assured that it is great gain to our departed friends to be with Christ and the ransomed, and though sorrowing we may well rejoice in hope of a blissful and glorious reunion in the Kingdom of God. This hope is ours. G. A.

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