

A Divine Cordial Chapter IV

Thomas Watson

Thomas Watson was of the group known as Non-conformist. His date of birth is unknown but it is known that he died at Barnston in 1686. He was educated at Emanuel College, Cambridge, and in 1646 was appointed to preach at St Stephen's, Walbrook. He showed strong Presbyterian views during the civil war, with, however, an attachment for the king; because of his share in Love's plot to recall Charles II. He was imprisoned in 1651, but was released and reinstated vicar of St. Stephen's in 1652. He acquired fame as a preacher, but in 1662 was ejected at the Restoration. He continued to exercise his ministry privately. In 1672 after the declaration of indulgence he obtained a licence for Crosby Hall, where he preached for several years, until his retirement to Barnston upon the failure of his health. Watson was a man of learning, and acquired fame by his quaint devotional and expository writings. Of his many works may be mentioned, *The Art of Divine Contentment* (London, 1653); *The Saint's Delight* (1657); *Jerusalem's Glory* (1661); *Divine Cordial* (1663); *The Godly Man's Picture* (1666); *The Holy Eucharist* (1668); *Heaven Taken by Storm* (1669); and *A Body of Practical Divinity; . . . One Hundred Seventy Six Sermons on the Lesser Catechism* (1692).

Of Love to God

I proceed to the second general branch of the text. The persons interested in this privilege. They are lovers of God. "*All things work together for good, to them that love God.*"

Despisers and haters of God have no lot or part in this privilege. It is children's bread, it belongs only to them that love God. Because love is the very heart and spirit of religion. I shall the more fully treat upon this; and for the further discussion of it, let us notice these five things concerning love to God.

1. The nature of love to God. Love is an expansion of soul. or the inflaming of the affections, by which a Christian breathes after God as the supreme and sovereign good. Love is to the soul as the weights to the clock, it sets the soul a-going towards God, as the wings by which we fly to heaven. By love we cleave to God, as the needle to the loadstone.

2. The ground of love to God; that is, knowledge. We cannot love that which we do not know. That our love may be drawn forth to God, we must know these three things in Him:

(i.) A fulness (Col. i. 19). He has a fulness of grace to cleanse us, and of glory to crown us; a fulness not only of sufficiency, but of redundancy. He is a sea of goodness without bottom and banks.

(ii.) A freeness. God has an innate propensity to dispense mercy and grace; He drops as the honeycomb. "*Whosoever will. let him take of the water of life freely*" (Rev. xxii. 17). God does not require that we should bring money with us, only appetite.

(iii.) A propriety, or property. We must know that this fulness in God is ours. "*This God is our God*" (Psalm xlviii. 14). Here is the ground of love — His Deity, and the interest we have in Him.

3. The kinds of love ? which I shall branch into these three:

(i.) There is a love of appreciation. When we set a high value upon God as being the most sublime and infinite good, we so esteem God, as that if we have Him, we do not care though we want all things else. The stars vanish when the sun appears. All creatures vanish in our thoughts when the Sun of righteousness shines in His full splendour.

(ii.) A love of complacency and delight — as a man takes delight in a friend whom he loves. The soul that loves God rejoices in Him as in his treasure, and rests in Him as in his centre. The heart is so set upon God that it desires no more. "*Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth*" (John xiv. 8).

(iii.) A love of benevolence — which is a wishing well to the cause of God. He that is endeared in affection to his friend. wishes all happiness to him. This is to love God when we are well-wishers. We desire that His interest may prevail. Our vote and prayer is that His name may be had in honour; that His gospel, which is the rod of His strength, may, like Aaron's rod, blossom and bring forth fruit.

4. The properties of love.

(i.) Our love to God must be entire, and that, in regard of the subject, it must be with the whole heart. "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*" (Mark xii. 30). In the old law, a high priest was not to marry with a widow, nor with a harlot — not with a widow, because he had not her first love; nor with a harlot, because he had not all her love. God will have the whole heart. "*Their heart is divided*" (Hos. x. 2). The true mother would not have the child divided; and God will not have the heart divided. God will not be an inmate, to have only one room in the heart, and all the other rooms let out to sin. It must be an entire love.

(ii.) It must be a sincere love. "*Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus in sincerity*" (Eph. vi. 24). Sincere; it alludes to honey that is quite pure. Our love to God is

sincere, when it is pure and without self-interest: this the school-men call a love of friendship. We must love Christ, as Augustine says, for Himself: as we love sweet wine for its taste. God's beauty and love must be the two loadstones to draw our love to Him. Alexander had two friends, Hephestion and Craterus, of whom he said, "Hephestion loves me because I am Alexander; Craterus loves me because I am king Alexander." The one loved his person, the other loved his gifts. Many love God because He gives them corn and wine, and not for His intrinsic excellences. We must love God more for what He is, than for what He bestows. True love is not mercenary. You need not hire a mother to love her child: a soul deeply in love with God needs not be hired by rewards. It cannot but love Him for that lustre of beauty that sparkles forth in Him.

(iii.) It must be a fervent love. The Hebrew word for love signifies ardency of affection. Saints must be seraphim, burning in holy love. To love one coldly, is the same as not to love him. The sun shines as hot as it can. Our love to God must be intense and vehement; like coals of juniper, which are most acute and fervent (Psalm cxx. 4). Our love to transitory things must be indifferent; we must love as if we loved not (1 Cor. vii. 30). But our love to God must flame forth. The spouse was sick of love to Christ (Cant. ii. 5). We can never love God as He deserves. As God's punishing us is less than we deserve (Ezra ix. 13), so our loving Him is less than He deserves.

(iv.) Love to God must be active. It is like fire, which is the most active element; it is called the labour of love (1 Thess. i. 3). Love is no idle grace; it sets the head a studying for God, the feet a running in the ways of His commandments. "*The love of Christ constrains*" (2 Cor. v. 14). Pretences of love are insufficient. True love is not only seen at the tongue's end, but at the finger's end; it is the labour of love. The living creatures, mentioned in Ezekiel i. 8, had wings — an emblem of a good Christian. He has not only the wings of faith to fly, but hands under his wings: he works by love, he spends and is spent for Christ.

(v.) Love is liberal. It has love-tokens to bestow (1 Cor. xiii. 4). Charity is kind. Love has not only a smooth tongue, but a kind heart. David's heart was fired with love to God, and he would not offer that to God which cost him nothing (2 Sam. xxiv. 24). Love is not only full of benevolence, but beneficence. Love which enlarges the heart, never straitens the hand. He that loves Christ, will be liberal to His members. He will be eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. The backs and bellies of the poor shall be the furrows where he sows the golden seeds of liberality. Some say they love God, but their love is lame of one hand, they give nothing to good uses. Indeed faith deals with invisibles, but God hates that love which is invisible. Love is like new wine, which will have vent; it vents itself in good works. The apostle speaks it in honour of the Macedonians, that they gave to the poor saints, not only up to, but beyond their power (2 Cor. viii. 3). Love is bred at court, it is a noble munificent grace.

(vi.) Love to God is peculiar. He who is a lover of God gives Him such a love as he bestows upon none else. As God gives His children such a love as He does not bestow upon the wicked — electing, adopting love; so a gracious heart gives to God such a special distinguishing love as none else can share in. "*I have espoused you to one*

husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. xi. 2). A wife espoused to one husband gives him such a love as she has for none else; she does not part with her conjugal love to any but her husband. So a saint espoused to Christ gives Him a peculiarity of love, a love incommunicable to any other, namely, a love joined with adoration. Not only the love is given to God, but the soul. "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse" (Cant. iv. 12). The heart of a believer is Christ's garden. The flower growing in it is love mixed with divine worship, and this flower is for the use of Christ alone, The spouse keeps the key of the garden, that none may come there but Christ.

(vii.) Love to God is permanent. It is like the fire the vestal virgins kept at Rome, it does not go out. True love boils over, but does not give over. Love to God, as it is sincere without hypocrisy, so it is constant without apostacy. Love is like the pulse of the body, always beating; it is not a land, but a spring flood. As wicked men are constant in love to their sins, neither shame, nor sickness, nor fear of hell, will make them give over their sins; so, nothing can hinder a Christian's love to God. Nothing can conquer love, not any difficulties, or oppositions. "*Love is strong as the grave*" (Cant. viii. 6). The grave swallows up the strongest bodies; so love swallows up the strongest difficulties. "*Many waters cannot quench love*" (Cant. viii. 7). Neither the sweet waters of pleasure, nor the bitter waters of persecution. Love to God abides firm to death. "*Being rooted and grounded in love*" (Ephes. iii. 17). Light things, as chaff and feathers, are quickly blown away, but a tree that is rooted abides the storm; he that is rooted in love, endures. True love never ends, but with the life.

5. The degree of love. We must love God above all other objects. "*There is nothing on earth that I desire beside thee*" (Psalm lxxiii. 25). God is the quintessence of all good things, He is superlatively good. The soul seeing a super-eminency in God, and admiring in Him that constellation of all excellencies, is carried out in love to Him in the highest degree. The measure of our love to God, says Bernard, must be to love Him without measure. God, who is the chief of our happiness, must have the chief of our affections. The creature may have the milk of our love, but God must have the cream. Love to God must be above all other things, as the oil swims above the water.

We must love God more than relations. As in the case of Abraham's offering up Isaac; Isaac being the son of his old age, no question he loved him entirely, and doted on him; but when God said, "*Abraham, offer up thy son*" (Gen. xxii. 2), though it were a thing which might seem, not only to oppose his reason, but his faith, for the Messiah was to come of Isaac, and if he be cut off, where shall the world have a Mediator! Yet such was the strength of Abraham's faith and ardency of his love to God, that he will take the sacrificing knife, and let out Isaac's blood. Our blessed Saviour speaks of hating father and mother (Luke xiv. 26). Christ would not have us be unnatural; but if our dearest relations stand in our way, and would keep us from Christ, either we must step over them, or know them not (Deut. xxxiii. 9). Though some drops of love may run beside to our kindred and alliance, yet the full torrent must run out after Christ. Relations may lie on the bosom, but Christ must lie in the heart.

We must love God more than our estate. *"Ye took joy fully the spoiling of your goods"* (Heb. x. 34). They were glad they had anything to lose for Christ. If the world be laid in one scale, and Christ in the other, He must weigh heaviest. And is it thus? Has God the highest room in our affections? Plutarch says, "When a dictator was created in Rome, all other authority was for the time suspended": so when the love of God bears sway in the heart, all other love is suspended, and is as nothing in comparison of this love.

Use. A sharp reproof to those who do not love God.

This may serve for a sharp reproof to such as have not a dram of love to God in their hearts — and are there such miscreants alive? He who does not love God is a beast with a man's head. Oh wretch! do you live upon God every day, yet not love Him? If one had a friend that supplied him continually with money, and gave him all his allowance, were not he worse than a barbarian, who did not respect and honour that friend? Such a friend is God; He gives you your breath, He bestows a livelihood upon you, and will you not love Him? You will love your prince if he saves your life, and will you not love God who gives you your life? What loadstone so powerful to draw love, as the blessed Deity? He is blind whom beauty does not tempt; he is sottish who is not drawn with the cords of love. When the body is cold and has no heat in it, it is a sign of death: that man is dead who has no heat of love in his soul to God. How can he expect love from God, who shows no love to Him? Will God ever lay such a viper in His bosom, as casts forth the poison of malice and enmity against Him?

This reproof falls heavy upon the infidels of this age, who are so far from loving God, that they do all they can to show their hatred of Him. *"They declare their sin as Sodom"* (Isa. iii. 9). *"They set their mouth against the heavens"* (Psalm lxxiii. 9), in pride and blasphemy, and bid open defiance to God. These are monsters in nature, devils in the shape of men. Let them read their doom: *"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema-maranatha"* (1 Cor. xvi. 22), that is, let him be accursed from God, till Christ's coming to judgment. Let him be heir to a curse while he lives, and at the dreadful day of the Lord, let him hear that heart-rending sentence pronounced against him, *"Depart, ye cursed."*

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