

***DWIGHT LYMAN
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A photograph of a hand reaching towards a bright sunset over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a lens flare effect. The water is calm and reflects the light. The hand is in the foreground, with fingers slightly curled as if reaching for something.

***THE WAY TO GOD
AND HOW
TO FIND IT***

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The Way to God and How to Find It

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

[CHAPTER I.](#)

[CHAPTER II.](#)

[CHAPTER III.](#)

[CHAPTER IV.](#)

[CHAPTER V.](#)

[CHAPTER VI.](#)

[CHAPTER VII.](#)

[CHAPTER VIII.](#)

[CHAPTER IX.](#)

CHAPTER I.

Table of Contents

“LOVE THAT PASSETH KNOWLEDGE.”

“To know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.”
(Ephesians iii. 19.)

If I could only make men understand the real meaning of the words of the apostle John—“God is love,” I would take that single text, and would go up and down the world proclaiming this glorious truth. If you can convince a man that you love him you have won his heart. If we really make people believe that God loves them, how we should find them crowding into the kingdom of heaven! The trouble is that men think God hates them; and so they are all the time running away from Him.

We built a church in Chicago some years ago; and were very anxious to teach the people the love of God. We thought if we could not preach it into their hearts we would try and burn it in; so we put right over the pulpit in gas-jets these words—God is Love. A man going along the streets one night glanced through the door, and saw the text. He was a poor prodigal. As he passed on he thought to himself, “God is Love! No! He does not love me; for I am a poor miserable sinner.” He tried to get rid of the text; but it seemed to stand out right before him in letters of fire. He went on a little further; then turned round, went back, and went into the meeting. He did not hear the sermon; but the words of that short text had got deeply lodged in his heart, and that was enough. It is of little account what men say if

the Word of God only gets an entrance into the sinner's heart. He staid after the first meeting was over; and I found him there weeping like a child. As I unfolded the Scriptures and told him how God had loved him all the time, although he had wandered so far away, and how God was waiting to receive him and forgive him, the light of the Gospel broke into his mind, and he went away rejoicing.

There is nothing in this world that men prize so much as they do Love. Show me a person who has no one to care for or love him, and I will show you one of the most wretched beings on the face of the earth. Why do people commit suicide? Very often it is because this thought steals in upon them—that no one loves them; and they would rather die than live.

I know of no truth in the whole Bible that ought to come home to us with such power and tenderness as that of the Love of God; and there is no truth in the Bible that Satan would so much like to blot out. For more than six thousand years he has been trying to persuade men that God does not love them. He succeeded in making our first parents believe this lie; and he too often succeeds with their children.

The idea that God does not love us often comes from false teaching. Mothers make a mistake in teaching children that God does not love them when they do wrong; but only when they do right. That is not taught in Scripture. You do not teach your children that when they do wrong you hate them. Their wrong-doing does not change your love to hate; if it did, you would change your love a great many times. Because your child is fretful, or has committed some act of

disobedience, you do not cast him out as though he did not belong to you! No! he is still your child; and you love him. And if men have gone astray from God it does not follow that He hates *them*. It is the sin that He hates.

I believe the reason why a great many people think God does not love them is because they are measuring God by their own small rule, from their own standpoint. We love men as long as we consider them worthy of our love; when they are not we cast them off. It is not so with God. There is a vast difference between human love and Divine love.

In Ephesians iii. 18, we are told of the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of God's love. Many of us think we know something of God's love; but centuries hence we shall admit we have never found out much about it. Columbus discovered America; but what did he know about its great lakes, rivers, forests, and the Mississippi Valley? He died, without knowing much about what he had discovered. So, many of us have discovered something of the love of God; but there are heights, depths and lengths of it we do not know. That Love is a great ocean; and we require to plunge into it before we really know anything of it. It is said of a Roman Catholic Archbishop of Paris, that when he was thrown into prison and condemned to be shot, a little while before he was led out to die, he saw a window in his cell in the shape of a cross. Upon the top of the cross he wrote "height," at the bottom "depth," and at the end of each arm "length." He had experienced the truth conveyed in the hymn—

“When I survey the wondrous Cross,
On which the Prince of Glory died.”

When we wish to know the love of God we should go to Calvary. Can we look upon that scene, and say God did not love us? That cross speaks of the love of God. Greater love never has been taught than that which the cross teaches. What prompted God to give up Christ?—what prompted Christ to die?—if it were not love? “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Christ laid down His life for His enemies; Christ laid down His life for His murderers; Christ laid down His life for them that hated Him; and the spirit of the cross, the spirit of Calvary, is love. When they were mocking Him and deriding Him, what did He say? “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” That is love. He did not call down fire from heaven to consume them; there was nothing but love in His heart.

If you study the Bible you will find that the love of God is *unchangeable*. Many who loved you at one time have perhaps grown cold in their affection, and turned away from you: it may be that their love is changed to hatred. It is not so with God. It is recorded of Jesus Christ, just when He was about to be parted from His disciples and led away to Calvary, that: “having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end” (John xiii. 1). He knew that one of His disciples would betray Him; yet He loved Judas. He knew that another disciple would deny Him, and swear that he never knew Him; and yet He loved Peter. It was the love which Christ had for Peter that broke his heart, and brought him back in penitence to the feet of his Lord. For three years Jesus had been with the disciples trying to teach them His love, not only by His life and words, but by

His works. And, on the night of His betrayal, He takes a basin of water, girds Himself with a towel, and taking the place of a servant, washes their feet; He wanted to convince them of His unchanging love.

There is no portion of Scripture I read so often as John xiv; and there is none that is more sweet to me. I never tire of reading it. Hear what our Lord says, as He pours out His heart to His Disciples: "At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you. He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and *he that loveth Me shall be loved by My Father*" (xiv. 20,21). Think of the great God who created heaven and earth loving you and me! . . . "If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him; and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him" (v. 23).

Would to God that our puny minds could grasp this great truth, that the Father and the Son so love us that They desire to come and abide with us. Not to tarry for a night, but to come and *abide* in our hearts.

We have another passage more wonderful still in John xvii. 23. "I in them, and thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, *and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me.*" I think that is one of the most remarkable sayings that ever fell from the lips of Jesus Christ. There is no reason why the Father should not love him. He was obedient unto death; He never transgressed the Father's law, or turned aside from the path of perfect obedience by one hair's breadth. It is very different with us; and yet, notwithstanding all our rebellion and foolishness, He says that if we are trusting in

Christ, the Father loves us as He loves the Son. Marvellous love! Wonderful love! That God can possibly love us as He loves His own Son seems too good to be true. Yet that is the teaching of Jesus Christ.

It is hard to make a sinner believe in this unchangeable love of God. When a man has wandered away from God he thinks that God hates him. We must make a distinction between sin and the sinner. God loves the sinner; but He hates the sin. He hates sin, because it mars human life. It is just because God loves the sinner that He hates sin.

God's love is not only unchangeable, but *unfailing*. In Isaiah xlix. 15, 16 we read: "Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget; yet will I not forget thee. Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy walls are continually before Me."

Now the strongest human love that we know of is a *mother's love*. Many things will separate a man from his wife. A father may turn his back on his child; brothers and sisters may become inveterate enemies; husbands may desert their wives; wives, their husbands. But a mother's love endures through all. In good repute, in bad repute, in the face of the world's condemnation, a mother loves on, and hopes that her child may turn from his evil ways and repent. She remembers the infant smiles, the merry laugh of childhood, the promise of youth; and she can never be brought to think him unworthy. Death cannot quench a mother's love; it is stronger than death.

You have seen a mother watching over her sick child. How willingly she would take the disease into her own body

if she could thus relieve her child! Week after week she will keep watch; she will let no one else take care of that sick child.

A friend of mine, some time ago, was visiting in a beautiful home where he met a number of friends. After they had all gone away, having left something behind, he went back to get it. There he found the lady of the house, a wealthy lady, sitting behind a poor fellow who looked like a tramp. *He was her own son.* Like the prodigal, he had wandered far away: yet the mother said, "This is my boy; I love him still." Take a mother with nine or ten children, if one goes astray, she seems to love that one more than any of the rest.

A leading minister in the state of New York once told me of a father who was a very bad character. The mother did all she could to prevent the contamination of the boy; but the influence of the father was stronger, and he led his son into all kinds of sin until the lad became one of the worst of criminals. He committed murder, and was put on his trial. All through the trial, the widowed mother (for the father had died) sat in the court. When the witnesses testified against the boy it seemed to hurt the mother much more than the son. When he was found guilty and sentenced to die, every one else feeling the justice of the verdict, seemed satisfied at the result. But the mother's love never faltered. She begged for a reprieve; but that was denied. After the execution she craved for the body; and this also was refused. According to custom, it was buried in the prison yard. A little while afterwards the mother herself died; but, before she was taken away, she expressed a desire to be

buried by the side of her boy. She was not ashamed of being known as the mother of a murderer.

The story is told of a young woman in Scotland, who left her home, and became an outcast in Glasgow. Her mother sought her far and wide, but in vain. At last, she caused her picture to be hung upon the walls of the Midnight Mission rooms, where abandoned women resorted. Many gave the picture a passing glance. One lingered by the picture. It is the same dear face that looked down upon her in her childhood. She has not forgotten nor cast off her sinning child; or her picture would never have been hung upon those walls. The lips seemed to open, and whisper, "Come home; I forgive you, and love you still." The poor girl sank down overwhelmed with her feelings. She was the prodigal daughter. The sight of her mother's face had broken her heart. She became truly penitent for her sins, and with a heart full of sorrow and shame, returned to her forsaken home; and mother and daughter were once more united.

But let me tell you that no mother's love is to be compared with the love of God; it does not measure the height of the depth of God's love. No mother in this world ever loved her child as God loves you and me. Think of the love that God must have had when He gave His Son to die for the world. I used to think a good deal more of Christ than I did of the Father. Somehow or other I had the idea that God was a stern judge; that Christ came between me and God, and appeased the anger of God. But after I became a father, and for years had an only son, as I looked at my boy I thought of the Father giving His Son to die; and it seemed to me as if it required more love for the Father to give His

Son than for the Son to die. Oh, the love that God must have had for the world when He gave His Son to die for it! “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John iii. 16). I have never been able to preach from that text. I have often thought I would; but it is so high that I can never climb to its height; I have just quoted it and passed on. Who can fathom the depth of those words: “God so loved the world?” We can never scale the heights of His love or fathom its depths. Paul prayed that he might know the height, the depth, the length, and the breadth, of the love of God; but it was past his finding out. It “passeth knowledge” (Eph. iii. 19).

Nothing speaks to us of the love of God, like the cross of Christ. Come with me to Calvary, and look upon the Son of God as He hangs there. Can you hear that piercing cry from His dying lips: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!” and say that He does not love you? “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John xv. 13). But Jesus Christ laid down His life *for his enemies*.

Another thought is this: He loved us long before we ever thought of Him. The idea that he does not love us until we first love Him is not to be found in Scripture. In 1 John iv. 10, it is written: “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” He loved us before we ever thought of loving Him. You loved your children before they knew anything about your love. And so, long before we ever thought of God, we were in His thoughts.

What brought the prodigal home? It was the thought that his father loved him. Suppose the news had reached him that he was cast off, and that his father did not care for him any more, would he have gone back? Never! But the thought dawned upon him that his father loved him still: so he rose up, and went back to his home. Dear reader, the love of the Father ought to bring us back to Him. It was Adam's calamity and sin that revealed God's love. When Adam fell God came down and dealt in mercy with him. If any one is lost it will not be because God does not love him: it will be because he has resisted the love of God.

What will make Heaven attractive? Is it the pearly gates or the golden streets? No. Heaven will be attractive, because there we shall behold Him who loved us so much as to give His only-begotten Son to die for us. What makes home attractive? Is it the beautiful furniture and stately rooms? No; some homes with all these are like whited sepulchres. In Brooklyn a mother was dying; and it was necessary to take her child from her, because the little child could not understand the nature of the sickness, and disturbed her mother. Every night the child sobbed herself to sleep in a neighbor's house, because she wanted to go back to her mother's; but the mother grew worse, and they could not take the child home. At last the mother died; and after her death they thought it best not to let the child see her dead mother in her coffin. After the burial the child ran into one room crying "Mamma! mamma!" and then into another crying "Mamma! mamma!" and so went over the whole house: and when the little creature failed to find that loved one she cried to be taken back to the neighbors. So