

INGRATITUDE OF MAN

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not."

John 1:11

I WOULD very frankly confess at the outset that I am not about to preach from the words of this text and that I have selected it solely because it contains an epitome of man's behavior towards the Savior. He came unto His own people, the Jews, and answered in every particular to the descriptions which their Prophets had given. But as they were looking for a temporal leader who should dazzle them with an earthly kingdom, they would not acknowledge the true Messiah. And though He continued to come unto them preaching and working such miracles among them as no other man did, so that their unbelief was without excuse, they still rejected Him. This was a gross act of ingratitude. It was superlative kindness which brought Jesus to that nation in particular and to the sons of men in general—it was supreme ingratitude when that nation, alas, in this representing us all, would not receive Him, but rejected the Lord of Glory.

I use our text as an illustration of the ingratitude of men towards our Lord, and it is upon that subject that I intend to preach at this time. I lay the charge against not only those who lived in Christ's day, but against mankind in general—against this assembly in particular—and against myself, also, in sad measure. We have treated the Lord ungratefully and have not rendered unto Him according to the benefits received. In commencement, we shall speak upon the fact that those among whom Jesus lived were guilty of ingratitude towards Him. Secondly, coming home to ourselves, we shall dwell more at length upon the lamentable fact that we, too, are guilty of ingratitude towards Him. We shall close by observing, What then? What follows out of this? What lessons are we to learn from it?

1. First then, THE PEOPLE AMONG WHOM OUR LORD DWELT WERE GUILTY OF INGRATITUDE TOWARDS HIM. They were a favored people above all nations. It was a distinguishing mark of Divine favor that the Messiah should be born among them. They ought to have received Him with delight. His signs and evidence of Messiahship were clear enough. He worked among them unexampled miracles, and He spoke as no other man spoke, yet they rejected Him, treating their best friend as though He had been their worst foe. This was a high-handed act of national ingratitude!

Special cases occurred in our Lord's life involving still greater ingratitude. Among the people of Israel many became partakers of our Lord's healing power. Many blind eyes did He bless with sight. Into many deaf ears did He cause sound to enter. Not a few lame men leaped as an hart at His bidding, and many that were sick of palsy and all manner of diseases were suddenly restored by His word. Yet the mass of these healed ones did not become His disciples, for the number of His male disciples, after He had ascended, was about 120—yet our Savior had not healed merely 120, but, according to the Evangelists, many hundreds—I might, without exaggeration, say many thousands had been partakers of His healing benefits! They were in their own persons testimonies to the Lord's Divine power and yet they did not worship Him!

From where did this obstinate unbelief come? Strange ingratitude this must have been, that a man should owe to Christ his eyes, and yet refuse to see in Christ his Savior—that he should owe to Christ the tongue with which he spoke, and yet should be silent in the great Physician's praise! Yet so it was. Many were healed, but few believed. We know, moreover, that our Lord fed thousands of hungry persons. He multiplied loaves and fishes, and fed crowds so that they did all eat and were filled. For a time He was very popular with them—as anyone will be who has loaves and fishes to distribute—and they would have made him a king, for idle men much desire a monarch who will supply their needs and relieve them from personal labor.

Yet these persons had no affection for His person or doctrine, but followed Him simply and alone for what they could get from Him. Many of these selfish followers, doubtless, gave their voices against Him and shouted, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" They ate bread with Him and lifted up their heel against Him. Surely, after sitting at a table so marvelously supplied, reason itself would have suggested to every feaster that their Host must be a Prophet sent of God, if not God Himself. 'Tis strange, 'tis passing strange, 'tis amazing that men receiving so much at His hands should still remain unbelievers in Him.

The same treatment was dealt out to our Lord when He acted as the Teacher of the people. He taught them pure Truths of God in the best conceivable manner, and small, indeed, was His reward. They could not complain of His sermons, that they were dull and unattractive, or that they were austere and devoid of sympathy. We never read that a hearer ever fell asleep under Christ's preaching, as Eutychus did under the lengthy discourse of Paul. Neither were any terrified by His looks, as men have been by fierce fanatic leaders—His ministry was pleasing and charmed the ear—yet it was ill received. When His sermon at Nazareth was finished, what was His reward? They took Him to the brow of the hill and they would have cast Him down headlong had He not escaped!

When He taught the Jews in the Temple, "they took up stones again to stone Him." In return for His arguments of mercy, they assailed Him with the weapons of malice. Though, by declaring the glad tidings of salvation He rendered to His hearers the most precious service, some of them, in return, sought to entrap Him in His speech and others gnashed their teeth in rage against Him. He brought light into the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. Sometimes, when He found around Him a more select audience than usual, the great Teacher would not merely preach the elements of the Gospel, but would go more deeply into the mysteries of it, but He had no thanks for doing so. On one occasion He spoke to them concerning eating His flesh and drinking His blood—but He had cast His pearls before swine—they turned again to tear Him apart! And many of those who had followed Him up to that point forsook Him and walked no more with Him.

Even the disciples who were true at heart to Him did not always prize His sayings well enough to keep them in their minds—and they were not influenced by His teaching and example so much as they should have been. How often must the tender bosom of our Lord have been wrung with anguish over human unkindness? The adder's tooth of ingratitude left its print upon Him. Men returned unto Him evil for good, and for the heaped-up measure of His benevolence they filled up equally high the measure of their hate. What a plaintiveness is there in that question which He asked after He had healed 10 lepers, and only one of them returned to thank Him—"Were there not 10 cleansed, but where are the nine?" as if He had expected at least that they would thank Him—it was the least they could do in return for so matchless a blessing as deliverance from a deadly disease!

Surely, whenever our Lord looked upon the handful of His followers He must have recollected the hosts upon whom He had conferred benefits, and said within himself, "Where are the nine?" From that thankless generation the meek and lowly One received no recompense of love for His temporal and spiritual bounties. Here and there a grateful woman ministered to Him of her substance, and now and then a thankful soul became His disciple. But, for the most part there was no response to His love, save such as that which Jerusalem heard when, for His tearful cries of compassion, He received shouts of murderous hate demanding that He should be crucified!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, the further our Lord Jesus Christ went on in life the more did He experimentally know the base ingratitude of mankind. He lived for them—in obedience to His Father He spent His whole life for men. He lived first for God's Glory, and next for love of men. His meat and drink was to do men good. He forgot Himself—He utterly renounced all ambitious purposes and gave Himself away that He might seek and save the lost. As a mother devotes herself to her babe so did Jesus lay Himself out for men. No! No mother ever loved her babe as Jesus loved His own which were in the world! And yet, continually, in every way, men sought to take away His life, which was more valuable to them than it was to Him—for it was for their sakes, only, that He continued, still, to live on earth.

How often had He to escape their cruel hands, and when His hour was come how eagerly did they conspire to hound Him to His death! One would have thought when the mob stood in the street of Jerusalem howling out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him!" that He must have been a common informer who had betrayed men for self—or a poisoner who had secretly tainted the bread of the people with a deadly drug! Or a blasphemer who had profaned every holy thing! Or a wretch whose character was doubly dyed in infamy! Instead of which, there stood before that furious crowd the meekest among men! The most inoffensive, and, at the same time, the most generous! The most self-denying, the most tender Man of all of woman born. Yet, how lustily they cry, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" and when the question is put by the Roman Governor, "Why, what evil has He done?" they can give no answer to it, and, therefore, they drown the question with their shouts, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Oh, base ingratitude of men to recompense such a life as His with such a cruel death!

At last that evil generation had its way with the Man of Sorrows and they took Him after He had been scourged, and led Him away to be crucified. We know well that He needed not have died even then. One thought of His could have averted the arrows of death. He had but to will it and the nails would have sprung from their places, and from the Cross the Lord would have leaped into the midst of His foes—to their horror and dismay. He was dying for men! He suffered each pang for men! For men the crown of thorns! For men the nailed hands! For men the pierced side! For men the bleeding feet! For men the gall cup! For men the pain! And for men the thirst! "He saved others, Himself He could not save."

It was the greatest sacrifice that man had ever made for man, and yet how was it repaid? The cruel crowd stood around Him and scoffed at His pains. They made jests upon His Person—they insulted His faith—they mocked His prayers! O You dear Christ of God, gladly would we have covered Your sacred body from those lewd and brutal eyes, and sheltered Your tender spirit from those inhuman taunts, but so it could not be! Man is allowed to be infamous that You may suffer to the uttermost, and, in so doing redeem Your people! See the contrast—Jesus loves and man hates! He dies for sinners, and sinners insult Him in His agonies.

When our Lord had died and had lain in the grave three days, and had risen again, His rising was for men. He might have gone into His Glory if He had pleased, but He tarried for 40 days to minister blessings to His people. The requital which He received from the Jewish people was of the same evil character. They doubted whether He had risen from the dead at all, and there were those who were base enough to invent that idle tale concerning the stealing of His body at night by His disciples. They laid imposture to the door of the Son of God, and charged the Perfect One with acting a lie!

O man, how mad you must be! What strange insanity of iniquity is this that you do thus requite your loving Lord! I think I hear a murmur among you, as though you said, "Ah, but this was the guilt of the Jews—the crime of unbelievers. All were not so cruel." But surely you have forgotten that in this ingratitude even those who were nearest to Him had a share! Those who were His immediate companions were ungrateful to Him. What do you think of him who said, when his Lord had been anointed by a loving woman's hand for His burial, that it was a waste? That what was given to anoint the King of Glory might have been sold for much, begrudging an offering to that divinely generous One who had given up all for us? One would have thought that those who abode with Him would have unanimously delighted in every honor shown to Him, and one is apt to imagine that they should more often have interposed to screen Him, if they might, from the ills of poverty, weariness and need.

Among them all, was there not one who should have pressed hospitality upon Him again and again, that He might no longer cry, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but I, the Son of Man, have not where to lay My head"? At any rate, when it came, at last, to the dying struggle, should not His bosom friends have watched with Him one hour? Might they not have guarded Gethsemane's gates when He left them outside the wall? And the three who came within a stone's cast of His grief and could hear His groans—could they not have forborne to slumber? Must they sleep while the Lord is in agony? He excused them, but could they excuse themselves?

The case of Judas was peculiarly afflicting to our Redeemer's sensitive soul. In him treason reached its climax and base ingratitude outdid itself. Yet Judas was an Apostle—the keeper of his Master's purse, the friend who ate bread with Him and lifted up his heel against Him. Shame on you, Judas! But, alas, you are not alone—others follow your hideous example, and some such may be among us! “Lord, is it I?” But, where were the rest of the disciples? Did they not accompany their Lord to the judgment seat and come forward and boldly bear witness to the righteousness of His Character? Not one of them was there to do Him service! “All the disciples forsook Him and fled.” One ventured where he saw his Master's ill-treatment, but he thrice denied Him and added oaths and curses, saying, “I know not the Man.” Thus acted those whom He had carried in His bosom and loved even to the end!

Those to whom He had opened up His inmost soul—who had eaten with Him His last solemn meal before His passion—untrue to all their professions of affection, sought every man his own safety, and left Him to His fate. Call you not this ingratitude? What is worse than the ingratitude of bosom friends and Brethren? The indictment lies against all that were of His day with whom He came in contact, from the worst even to the best. Where is the advocate who will plead their cause? There was none faithful, no, not one. Ingratitude stained all.

II. But let us not think severely of them and forget ourselves, for we, too, are in the same condemnation. This is our second point—WE ALSO HAVE BEEN UNGRATEFUL TO OUR LORD. While I have been turning over this subject in my own mind it has deeply affected me. But I feel quite powerless to produce it before you so that you shall be affected in the same manner unless God the Holy Spirit shall now be pleased to melt your hearts. Remember that to bring a charge of ingratitude against a man is a very strong thing to do. I would not like to be called untruthful. I should grievously feel it, but to be called ungrateful is equally as degrading.

Can any accusation be more dishonoring? Ingratitude is a mean and despicable vice! He who is guilty of it is unworthy of the name of man. A soldier who had been kindly rescued from shipwreck and hospitably entertained, was mean enough to endeavor to obtain from Philip of Macedon the house and farm of his generous host. Philip, in just anger, commanded that his forehead should be branded with the words, “The ungrateful guest.” That man must have felt like Cain when the mark of God was upon him—he must have desired to hide himself forever from the gaze of man. Prove a man ungrateful and you have placed him below the beasts, for even the brutes frequently exhibit the most touching gratitude to their benefactors.

The old classic story of Androcles and the lion rises before us—the man healed the lion, and years after, the lion, being let loose upon him, crouched at his feet and acknowledged him as a friend. Only the most despised creatures are used as metaphors of ingratitude! For instance, we speak of the donkey which drinks, and then kicks the bucket it has emptied, but we never speak thus of nobler animals. An ungrateful man is thus lower than the animals! Inasmuch as he returns evil for good, he is worse than bestial—he is devilish. Ingratitude is essentially infernal. Ingratitude to friends is vile, to parents it is worse—but to the Savior it is worst of all!

Therefore, what I shall have to say must not be received with coolness, as though the charge were a trivial one. It is a very serious matter that we should be open to an indictment of ingratitude towards the Lord Jesus Christ. Hear, then, and sorrow as you hear, for I also mourn as I speak! I lay the charge, first, against Believers—against those of us who are Christians—and are, therefore, most indebted to Christ's love and Grace. And we will observe at the outset that every sin of the Believer has in it a measure of ingratitude, for, since our Savior has suffered by reason of our sins, we are ungrateful when we wander into sin! Since He came to destroy the works of the devil—it is ungrateful to build, again, that which He has destroyed.

Shall that very sin which was the murderer of our Beloved be harbored by us? The very thought is treason! Since these sins of mine were my best Friend's worst enemies, and more to be blamed than the Jews or the Romans, would it not be a shameless need of love to make them my bosom companions? Our sins were the nails and our unbelief the spear! Away, then, with them all! Brothers and Sisters, if we do not watch most carefully against our besetting sins we shall be false to our Redeemer. If a woman saw her husband's murderer before her and gave her heart to him,

what should we think of her? May the Lord, by His Grace, prevent us from being equally shameless! May Grace enable us to take vengeance on our sins because they drew down vengeance on our Savior!

Saints are especially ungrateful to the Lord Jesus when they allow any rival to set up his throne in their hearts. He, "the chief among 10,000 and the altogether lovely," deserves to be admired and adored by our souls—not only beyond all others—but to the exclusion of all others. If your hearts were capacious enough to hold a thousand times more affection than they now contain, the Lord Jesus would deserve it all! If our hearts were as wide as Heaven, yes, as vast as seven heavens in one—Jesus, having bled and died for us ought to monopolize all our love! Yet we must confess that a wife, a child, a friend will steal away our hearts. Ambition for position, love of pleasure, desire to please, joy in wealth will invade and conquer a province of our hearts. Oh, base ingratitude which allows us to set up Dagon in the temple where the Crucified One, alone, should reign!

Oh, wretched unfaithfulness, which pines after these fleeting things in preference to the eternal Lover of souls! How common is this ingratitude! Do I address a single child of God but what must I acknowledge, "I am, indeed, guilty"? I sorrowfully confess my own offenses against the infinite love of Jesus in this respect, and will do so before God far more at large than here would be either fit or profitable. How often, too, might we be charged with ingratitude when we lose large measures of the Grace which we have already received. We have power given us, at times, by the Holy Spirit, to rise above the dead level of man's ordinary life, and we climb the mountain and stand upon a higher platform altogether.

There are times with us when we love the Lord with all our hearts—when our faith mounts to assurance and all our graces are bright and strong—but we come down from that mountain almost immediately! Our feet slide from the glorious elevation! It seems far easier to mount than it does to tarry aloft upon the wing. The Holy Spirit admits us into peculiar nearness to the heavenly Father and then we act inconsistently and lose our communion, and come to follow afar off as so many do. We have the sweet flavor of Divine love in our mouths and yet desert the banquet table—what is this but ingratitude? Is it not a slighting of the precious gifts of Jesus' Divine Grace?

He permits us to lean our heads on His bosom and we will not do so! He stands at our door and knocks, and we refuse to open to him! He calls us to take our fill of love, and we turn to the poor husks of earth. Have we not grievously provoked Him? Would He not long ago have divorced His unfaithful spouse if it had not been true that He hates putting away? Beat on your breasts, Beloved, and confess your ill manners towards your best Beloved!

Could we, any of us, plead innocence if the charge were brought in another way, namely, that we render Him but little service and give Him but lukewarm love? How much have we done for Jesus, after all? How much have we ever loved Him? How much do we love Him now? I must correct myself— I ought to have said how little. If we hear of the death of Christ upon the Cross, we listen to it as coldly as though it were a thrice told tale with which we had no concern. How is this? Are our hearts like an adamant stone? A silly story of a lovesick maid will bring tears to our eyes far sooner than the tragedy of the Cross!

If we did but see one of our fellow creatures suffer but a millionth part of what the Lord of Glory bore for us, we should be moved infinitely more than we are, now, when Calvary is before us. Why? Is not this black ingratitude? Who can extenuate such need of tenderness? Our love to Jesus, is it love at all? When I read of some of the saints giving up all that they have, crossing the sea, penetrating into barbarous regions, bearing their lives in their hands, sacrificing comforts, and living day by day on the verge of death amid fever and wild beasts—and all that they might honor Christ—I am utterly ashamed! What are we, my Brethren? Unto what shall we liken ourselves? Like a Colossus such men bstride their age, while we, base things, hide our dishonorable heads for shame at our spiritual littleness!

The love of Christ to us is like that ancient furnace which was heated seven times hotter, while our love is like a solitary spark which wonders within itself that it is yet alive. May the Holy Spirit

change this and give us yet to glow and burn with sacred fire like the bush in Horeb when it was aglow with Deity!

The same humiliation reflections arise when we meditate upon the consecration, or rather non-consecration, of our substance to the Redeemer's cause. What a small portion do the most of us give to His work, or to His poor! If you were to take the numbers of Church members, and the contributions to missions, you would hardly dare to say how little per head is given! It is so trifling that it is rather an insult to the Savior than an offering to Him. Some hearers even try to cheat the minister whom they flock to hear and evade every claim, even from the Church to which they belong. For the most part, when Christians take stock of what they have, and then calculate what they have given, they have great cause for shame. If our estimate of Christ's worth is according to our gifts to Him, there are some who would not give 20 pieces of silver for Him. To some these remarks are more applicable than to others—to many congregations more necessary than to you, for, thank God, there are those among you who delight to honor the Lord with their substance. But these are the last persons to think that they have done enough—in fact, those who do most for Christ are the first to feel that they do far too little!

Furthermore, Brethren, how often is ingratitude shown to our Lord Jesus by neglect of His commands. Some professors need to be driven to obedience. If you tell the man who earnestly loves Christ his duty, he is charmed to know it, and to attend to it at once. But love to Christ is so low in some professors' hearts that you must hammer the precept into them again and again, and again, and again! And yet they will linger long before they will fulfill their Master's will. They must be persuaded and threatened before they will yield. Fervent gratitude runs with winged feet wherever Jesus bids it go. If we were more jealously obedient to our Lord, it would be evident that we were more grateful to Him.

Now, I feel, Brothers and Sisters, in my heart as if I would be glad to have done preaching, for I need to get alone and sigh and weep this sermon over by myself. I need to confess and mourn over my own conscious ingratitude to my ever-blessed Lord, whom, nevertheless, I love. I do remember well the time when I imagined that if the Lord would only give me pardon through the atoning blood, nothing would be too difficult for me to attempt for His dear sake. And yet, though I have been cleansed from sins and accepted in Christ Jesus, I am too often sluggish in my Master's errands. Well do I remember when I first began to preach His Word—I thought if I might but have opportunities of pleading with men for Jesus I would pour out my very soul while I urged them to flee from the wrath to come!

Alas, although I am not altogether without zeal for God, my zeal falls far short of what it should be. Gladly would I speak fire—fire which should melt your hearts—and then set them on flame with ardent love to Jesus! I cannot reach my own ideal and I doubt not that if I could, I should still be faulty. I charge you not, my Brethren, with ingratitude without confessing and acknowledging it in myself. Come, my Brothers and Sisters, let us not confess with our lips only, but with inward penitential grief! Let us seek godly sorrow which works practical repentance! May we, in the power of the Holy Spirit, resolve that we will love our Lord better for the future and yield to the sweet constraints of His love.

Now I have a heavy task, indeed, and that is to speak of some whose ingratitude to Christ is even greater, if greater can be, for they utterly refuse to trust Him. I desire to speak with you to whom I have preached in vain these many years. The one topic of every Sabbath in this place is Jesus Christ crucified. I have other things to say to you, but this is repeated over and over again. You are told without ceasing that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners and that, "whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life." Notwithstanding all this, up to this moment many of you refuse to trust Him! You "stumble at the Word being disobedient," and you thus make the rock of salvation to be a rock of offense to you.

If you deny it, I will ask you, Why, then, have you not accepted Him for your Savior? Why are you still alienated in your hearts from Him? Perhaps your reply is that you do not think of these things. Is this, then, your conduct towards the dying Savior—that you will not even think of Him? Is He nothing to you? Do you despise His blood? Perhaps it is that you do not understand. Then

surely, in your case it must be a willful blindness of understanding, for the Truth of God has been put before you as plainly as words could utter it! And neither do I know how I could have spoken more clearly. You have rejected, up to this moment, the Christ who died for sinners! Do you know what you have done? I wish He would stand here upon this pulpit at this moment, that you might see who it is that you have despised.

See Him with the ruby drops still glistening upon His crown of thorns, His face bruised, His countenance lined with grief, His eyes red with tears, His shoulders furrowed with the lash, His hands and feet wounded with the nails and His side gashed with the lance—this is the Man of Sorrows whom you have refused! Look, now on Him whom you have pierced! Can you, in His Presence, continue your rejection? Will you still bar your hearts against Him? Will you now say to Him to His face, “Son of God, bleeding for human sin, we will not trust You! Son of Man, dying in the place of sinners, we will not yield to You”? Yet you have said that in His Presence, which is everywhere real, though undiscerned by eye or ear. With those eyes of fire which discern from Heaven everything that is done on earth, He has seen you impudently refusing to be saved by Him.

Alas, I have to go further. Some of you have not been content with rejecting the Lord, but have gone the length of opposing Him! You have made His Gospel the theme for jest and treated His people with indignity. It always staggers me that men should treat the meek and lowly Jesus and His gracious Gospel so roughly. There is something so tender and so meek about the Savior that I pity from my soul the wretch who had the heart to strike Him in the face, or was so base as to insult with spit that dear and sorrowful visage! Once in the sack of a city, when the fierce soldiers had commenced a general massacre, a little child was seized by a rough warrior, who was about to kill him, but stayed his hand when the little one said, piteously, “Please, Sir, don’t kill me, I am so little.”

I think the Savior’s meek and gentle manners might be a similar argument for staying the hand of wrath. Who can harm the harmless Lamb of God? Persecutor, what evil has Jesus done to you? Reviler, what has He ever said to injure you? When has He given you an ill word or look? Ah, it is to His silence that you owe your life! Should He accuse you, you would be undone forever! Yet He has not accused you to the Father, but has pleaded for your reprieve! Sometimes in our police courts you may have seen an inhuman husband brought before the magistrate for having maltreated the poor unhappy woman who is linked to him for life. The policeman has taken him in the very act of assaulting her—her poor sickly face bears evidence of his brutality.

She can scarcely stand, for his cruelty has put her life in jeopardy. Watch her closely. The magistrate asks her to give evidence against the creature who has so cruelly injured her. She weeps and shakes her head, but says not a word. She is asked, “Did he not ill-treat you yesterday?” She is long before she speaks, and then not a word is uttered against the husband whom she still loves, though there is nothing loveable about him. She declares that she cannot bear to appear against her husband and she will not. What a stone must that man’s heart be if he does not love her from then on all her days!

But, see a nobler counterpart! There is the Lord whom you have injured by your hard speeches and cruel mockeries. See you not His face all marred with your bruises? Yet He does not accuse you to the Father but when He opens His mouth to speak for sinners, He cries, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” He must be ingratitude incarnate who can continue to use Him or His cause spitefully! There is no chivalry, no—there is no manhood in the heart which treats spitefully one who neither provokes nor retaliates. I must add, before I close this point, that some are ungrateful to Christ, from whom, above all others, such conduct ought never to have proceeded. The text says—“He came to His own, and His own received Him not.”

In this very place the Lord Jesus has come to those who appeared to be His own. You, Sir, were your mother’s own boy, and she, now in Glory, was an ardent lover of the Savior. And when Jesus came to you He might have said, “This is the son of one of My dearest friends, the son of a woman whose whole heart was Mine—surely her son will love Me, too.” Yet you did not respond to Him. Jesus has come to your house and found there a wife who ardently loves Him, and He might well

have said, "Surely the husband of My handmaiden will receive his wife's Friend." Yet you have shut the door upon Him.

Possibly I address an unconverted person who is not only the son of a Christian father, but the child of one of God's own ambassadors, yet he himself is an enemy to God! Surely a minister's children should be the Lord's, and yet ministers' sons and daughters have been seen among reprobates. I know not why it is, but sadly often has this been the case. Do I address one such? I pray that you may no longer be ungrateful to your father's God. Yes, and there are some here who years ago were sorely sick and on the borders of the grave, and they said, "Please, God, if we ever get up again, we will seek the Lord." You were thus in a sense, "His own" by your own voluntary vow—but you have not received Him.

Today the Lord Jesus comes to you again, and shows His hands and side, and asks you why it is you break your promises to Him? He asks why it is you love not your mother's Savior? Why it is you care not for your father's God? And what it is that has turned you against Him? Many good works has He shown you, and for which of these do you stone Him? He is full of love, and pity, and mercy and power to save—for what reasons do you reject Him?

May the Lord grant that these appeals may have power with you by the voice of the Holy Spirit.

III. I close by answering the question WHAT THEN? What comes of all this? Why, first, let us appreciate the sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ! We must never lower our estimate of the bodily pains of Jesus. They were undoubtedly very great, but, after all, His mental sufferings were far greater and among the most acute of them must have been this—to be always treated with ingratitude by those whom He loved so well. Do I address, here, a tender heart which has bled from the stabs of ingratitude? A mother with an ungrateful son? A friend with a treacherous friend?

You know that nothing stings more than ingratitude, yet your Lord had to feel it every day! He was always occupied in doing everything for men, and men, on the other hand, were doing everything against Him. He was from day to day like Sebastian the martyr who was bound to a tree and made the target for a thousand arrows. The archers have sorely shot at Him and wounded Him, but His love abides in strength and so remains to this day.

Next, admire the Savior's love. When a man is kind and loving he will continue so until he meets with base returns, and then he is very apt to become indignant and stay the course of his benevolence. When we try to bring men together who have fallen out with each other—where ingratitude has been the cause of it—we use strong arguments. We have to say to the injured person, "You have been badly used, but labor to rise superior to it all. It is true that such ingratitude does deserve to forfeit your kindness, but do more than ordinary men would do—heap coals of fire on the ungrateful head!"

The Savior knew that men would be unkind to Him. He knew it all beforehand, and when men were ungrateful He did not merely hear their words, but He read their hearts—and He knew that their hearts were yet more opposed to Him—yet He never turned aside from His course of love. He pressed on, still, through reproaches and shame and derision and every form of human evil till He had finished the redemption of His people! Admire His love and let it kindle in you love in return.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, see next the mighty power of the pardoning blood of Jesus. Jesus can take away even this scarlet sin of ingratitude! Though He came to His own and His own received Him not, yet to as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to as many as believed on His name. Have you rejected Jesus 50 years? Come to Him even now, and He will blot out your sins in a moment! Have 70 years rolled over your guilty head, and have you remained deaf to all His appeals of mercy? Yet come and welcome, come and welcome! The gentle Savior has not exhausted His pity! May His Spirit draw you now, and you shall find Him as ready to receive you as He would have been 50 years ago. Admire the Grace which continues to invite and the efficacy of the blood which is still able to cleanse.

Another practical lesson is to let us see how we ought to forgive. If another man has injured me it is no reason why I should injure myself. Perhaps you do not see the application of that utterance. Well, here is the explanation of it. If I have loved a man and his only return is unkindness, shall I injure myself by leaving off loving him? After all, it will be a great injury to my heart to become unkind. If I have sought a man's good and he has only returned me evil, do not let me bring myself down to his level. Let me rather seek to rise higher! And because of his evil let me seek to do more good to him—then I shall be like Christ, for He did! When our sin abounded, His Grace did much more abound! In our Lord's life, sin and love contested which should win the day. Man sinned yet more and more, and Christ loved yet more and more. On the Cross He loved to the death and won the battle, and this day human ingratitude is beneath the feet of the conquering Savior. Love has won the day and sin is crushed beneath its feet. O Christian, do battle in the same spirit and the Lord help you to be more than conqueror through Him that loved you!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, lastly, let us judge how we ought to live in the light of this subject. If we have been ungrateful up till now, shall we be so any longer? No, let us now, on bended knee, with earnest soul, cry to God to inflame us with something of the fire which set the Savior on a blaze with sacred ardor for our good! Let us devote ourselves wholly to Him. Let us cry, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even with cords to the horns of the altar." What manner of people ought we be who owe so much to the Grace of God?

And there is this mournful reflection—what will become of those who shall die after having lived a life of constant ingratitude to Christ? There is a limit even to His mercy, for death shuts the golden gate of love. Justice takes the place of mercy as soon as the impenitent man has closed his dying eyes. An excellent writer has well said that, "Divine justice is love in flames," and so it is. When once love turns to jealousy, it is cruel as the grave—the coals thereof are of juniper that have a most vehement flame. You may despise Him, whose feet were pierced, and reject the Savior whose heart was opened with the spear—but He will come again. I know not when, but His Word is, "Behold, I come quickly."

Beware, I pray you, for in that day this shall be the word, "Behold, you despisers, and wonder and perish!" In that pierced hand shall be a rod of iron and He shall break His enemies in pieces like potters' vessels! His pierced feet shall be sandaled with light and out of the mouth which now speaks promises shall come forth a two-edged sword with which to strike His adversaries.

"Kiss the son lest He be angry and you perish from the way while His wrath is kindled but a little." He will forgive you now! He waits to be gracious to you now! Mercy now rules the day! But let the sun of mercy go down and the blackness of darkness shall abide forever. O provoke not the Lord! May His mercy turn your hearts by the power of His ever blessed Spirit and unto Him shall be the glory forever and ever. Amen.