

XXV.

God is Love.

MARCH 80, 1858.

“Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves: we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.”—
PSALM c.

IT was I, my dear friends, who requested our friend to read this Psalm. I have only strength to think of the love of God. God has loved us: this is the whole doctrine of the gospel. Let us love God: this is all its moral. Scarcely knowing whether I shall be able to make myself heard, I collect the little strength I have to invoke with you the everlasting and infinite love of God.

O Thou God! whose name is love, who never hast nor ever wilt do anything but in love, how can I be thankful enough, when I see these friends whose love for me has assembled them around my bed of sickness, of suffering, and of what besides Thou only knowest! I rejoice in their love. To whom has more love ever been shown than to me? Should I not be the most ungrateful of men if I were not the most grateful? Therefore I return Thee thanks, O my God! and I thank Thee still more, if possible, for Thy love which has so sorely afflicted me, but which has at the same time supported me; and I confess before these friends that Thou hast never suffered me to want for anything, though I have been so often wanting in faith and patience, and though I am so far from having attained that perfect patience to which I so ardently aspire. But Thou hast been all goodness, and so long as I have a breath of life and strength I will declare it before them. Thy goodness, Thy goodness, O my God! I thank Thee for the freeness with which Thou hast manifested this goodness towards me in freely forgiving all my sins—mine, the greatest of sinners, the least of Thy children, the poorest of Thy servants; but Thou hast loaded me with loving-kindnesses, and hast made use of me to advance Thy kingdom, even in the extreme weakness and pain in which I am plunged today. I bless Thee that Thou hast given me a Saviour. Without Him, I confess, O my God! I should have been irrecoverably lost, and now in the deepest despair. But I have a Saviour, who has freely saved me by His shed blood; and I wish it to be known that I rest entirely upon His blood shed for me. I confess that all my righteousness, all my works which have been admired, all my preaching which has been valued and praised—that all is in my sight but as “filthy rags,” and that there is nothing in me capable of subsisting a single moment before the light of Thy countenance and the brightness of Thy holiness. But now it is not I that shall be judged; it is Christ in me. And I know—I know that He will enter, and I with Him, and that we are so closely united that He could never

enter and leave me without. O God! I thank Thee with these friends, to whom Thou hast granted the same privilege and the same consolation, and to whom Thou hast deigned also to grant Thy Holy Spirit to apply to their souls the free gift of everlasting life by the blood of Jesus Christ. I return Thee thanks first of all for my dear family. I return Thee thanks for my brethren, my sisters, my friends, who have all been for me brothers and sisters indeed, and who now testify by their love and their tears their tender sympathy, which I have in nowise deserved, and of which I know that I am entirely unworthy, but which Thou hast awakened in them, and which is now so great a consolation to me. I thank Thee for all things. I thank Thee for the consolations Thou has shed over this week; for the nomination of the professor at Montauban, for which we have so earnestly prayed; for the treaty of peace signed this day, for which we have so often prayed, because we believe that peace upon earth is useful in increasing, as it has already done, that peace which comes down from above. It is true, Lord, for I will be sincere in Thy presence, that I suffer greatly, and that my joy and my thanksgivings are clouded by my continual suffering and weakness. But Thou hast sustained me hitherto, and I have this confidence, that my prayers, and those of my family and my friends, will obtain for me perfect patience. And now, O Lord! I take all these friends and place them all in Thy paternal bosom, in the name of Jesus, by the Holy Spirit. And may there not be one now in this room missing in the everlasting tabernacles; and, seated at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, may we recollect with unmingled joy the day which has assembled us here. O God! sanctify us wholly, and may all the rest of our lives be employed entirely in Thy service. May Thy Spirit dwell in us, and be the soul, the life, the joy of all—of our families, and of those amongst us who are afflicted. O Lord! several of us have sick friends, and very dear ones—we commend them all to Thee; I bear them all upon my heart before Thee. I will not attempt to name them, lest in my weakness I should forget any, and thus grieve some amongst those here present; but I take them all, and lay them at the foot of the cross of Jesus, that Thou mayest console and sanctify them. May grace and grace be with us all, now and for ever. Amen.

THE END.