

“THE GOSPEL AWAKENING.”

COMPRISING THE

SERMONS AND ADDRESSES,

Prayer Meeting Talks and Bible Readings,

OF THE

GREAT REVIVAL MEETINGS,

CONDUCTED BY

MOODY AND SANKEY,

IN THE CITIES OF

Philadelphia, New York, Chicago and Boston,

WITH THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE

CHRISTIAN CONVENTIONS OF MINISTERS AND LAYMEN.

From Verbatim Reports by our own Phonographer, and those of the New York Tribune, Chicago Inter-Ocean, Boston Journal and Boston Globe.

ALSO THE LIVES OF

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LOVE OF GOD.

“And the God of love and peace shall be with you.” 2 CORINTHIANS 13:11.

We have for our subject this evening, “Love.” I have often thought I wouldn’t have but one text; if I thought I could only make the world believe that God is love, I would only take that text, and go up and down the earth, trying to counteract what Satan has been telling them—that God is not love. He has made the world believe it effectually. It would not take twenty-four hours to make the world come to God, if you can only make them believe God is love. If you can really make a man believe you love him, you have won him; and if I could only make people really believe that God loves them, what a rush we would see for the kingdom of God! Oh, how they would rush in! But man has got a false idea about God, and he will not believe that he is a God of love. It is because he doesn’t know him.

Now, in Paul’s farewell letter to the Corinthians, in the 13th chapter, 2d Corinthians, he says: “Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect. Be of good comfort. Be of one mind. Live in peace, and the God of love”—he calls him the God of love—“and peace shall be with you.” Then John, who was better acquainted with Christ, telling us about the love God has for this perishing world, writes in this epistle, in the evening of his life, these words: “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God, and he that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love.” We built a church in Chicago a few years ago, and we were so anxious to make people believe that God is love, that we thought if we could not preach it into their hearts, we would burn it in, and so right over the pulpit we had the words put in gas jets, “God is love,” and every night we had it there. A man going along there one night glanced in through the door and saw the text. He was a poor prodigal, and he passed on, and as he walked away, he said to himself, “God is love? No. God is not love. God does not love me. He does not love me, for I am a poor, miserable sinner. If God was love, he would love me. God is not love.” Yet there the text was, burning down into his soul. And he went on a little further, and turned around and came back and went into the meeting. He didn’t hear what the sermon was, but the text got into his heart, and that is what we want. It is of very little account what men say, if God’s word only gets into the heart. And he stayed after meeting was over, and I found him there weeping like a child; but as I unfolded the Scripture, and told him how God had loved him from his earliest childhood all along, the light of the gospel broke into his mind, and he went away rejoicing. This would be the best meeting today we have had yet, if we could only make this audience believe that God is love.

Now, our brother who opened the meeting with prayer referred to the

difference between human and divine love. That is the very trouble with us. We are all the time measuring God's love by ours. We know that we love a man as long as he is worthy, and then we cast him off; but that is not divine love. There would be no hope for any of us if the Lord did that; and I have the idea that our mothers are to blame for a good deal of that, in their teaching during our childhood. They tell their children that the Lord loves them when they are good children, and when they are bad children the Lord does not love them. That is false teaching. God loves them all the time, just the same as you love your children. Suppose a mother should come in here with a little child, and after she has been here awhile, the child begins to cry, and she says, "Keep still;" but the child keeps on crying, and so she turns him over to the police, and says, "Take that child; I don't want him." What would you say of such a mother as that? Teach a child that God loves him only so long as he is good, and that when he is bad, the Lord does not love him; and you will find that when he grows up, if he has a bad temper, he will have the idea that God hates him, he will think God doesn't love him when he has got a bad temper; and as he has a bad temper all the time, of course God does not love him at all, but hates him all the time. Now God hates sin, but he loves the sinner; and there is a great difference between the love of God and our love— all the difference in the world between the human and the divine love.

Now, turn a moment to the 13th chapter of John's Gospel, 1st verse: "Now, before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." His love is unchangeable. That night he knew very well what was going to happen. Judas had gone out to betray him. He knew it. He had already left that little band to go out and sell Christ. Do you tell me Christ did not love Judas? That very night he said to him, "Judas, what thou doest, do quickly;" and when Judas, meeting him in the garden, kissed him, and he said, "Betrayest thou thy Master with a kiss?" was it not the voice of love and compassion, that ought to have broken Judas' heart? He loved him in the very hour that he betrayed him. And that is what is going to make hell so terrible—that you go there with the love of God beneath your feet. It is not that he doesn't love you; but you despise his love. It is a terrible thing to despise love. "He loved them unto the end." He knew very well that Peter was going to deny him that night, and curse and swear because he was mistaken for Jesus' companion. He knew all his disciples would forsake him, and leave him to suffer alone; and yet he says "He loved them unto the end." And the sweetest words that fell from the lips of the Son of God were that night, when they were going to leave him. Those words that fell from his lips that night will live forever. How they will live in the hearts of God's people! We could not get on very

well without the 14th of John, and the 15th, and 16th. It was on that memorable night that he uttered those blessed words; and on that very night that he told them how much God loved them. It seems as if that particular night, when he was about to be deserted by all, his heart was bursting with love for his flock.

Just let us look at the 16th chapter and the 27th verse, and see what he says: "For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came from God." I don't know but what Christ felt that there might be some of his disciples that would not love the Father as they loved him. I remember, for the first few years after I was converted, I had a good deal more love for Christ than for God the Father, whom I looked upon as the stern Judge; while I regarded Christ as the Mediator who had come between me and that stern Judge, and had appeased his wrath. But when I got a little better acquainted with my Bible, those views all fled. After I became a father and woke up to the realization of what it cost God to have his Son die, I began to see that God was to be loved just as much as his Son was. Why, it took more love for God to give his Son to die than it would to die himself. You would a thousand times sooner die yourself in your son's place than have him taken away. If the executioner was about to take your son to the gallows, you would say: "Let me die in his stead; Let my son be spared." Oh, think of the love God must have had for this world that he gave his only begotten Son to die for it. And that is what I want you to understand. "The Father himself loveth you because ye have loved me." If a man has loved Christ, God will set his love upon him. Then, in the 17th Chapter, 23d verse, in that wonderful prayer he made that night: "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." God could look down from heaven and see his Son fulfilling his will; and he said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." But when it is said, "God loved us as he loved his own Son," it used to seem to me to be downright blasphemy, until I found it was in the Word of God. That was the wonderful prayer he made on the night of his betrayal. Is there any love in the world like that? Is there anything to be compared to the love of God? Well may Paul say, "It passeth knowledge."

And then I can imagine some of you saying: "Well, he loved his disciples, and he loves those who serve him faithfully; but then I have been untrue." I may be speaking now to some backsliders; but if I am, I want to say to every one here, "The Lord loves you." A backslider came into the inquiry-room night before last, and I was trying to tell him God loved him; and he would hardly believe me. He thought because he had not kept up his love and faithfulness to God, and to his own vows, that God had stopped loving him. Now, it says in John, 13th chapter, "He loved them unto the end;" that is, his love

was unchangeable. You may have forgotten him, and betrayed him and denied him, but nevertheless he loves you; he loves the backslider. There is not a man here that has wandered from God and betrayed him, but what the Lord Jesus loves him and wants him to come back. Now in this 14th chapter of Hosea he says: "I will heal every backslider. I will love them freely." So the Lord tells the backsliders, "If you will only come back to me I will forgive you." It was thus with Peter who denied his Lord; the Savior forgave him, and sent him to preach his glorious gospel on the day of pentecost, when three thousand were won to Christ under one sermon of a backslider. Don't let a backslider go out of this hall this evening with that hard talk about the Lord. No backslider can say God has left him; he may think so, but it is one of the devil's lies. The Lord never left a man yet.

Just turn to the 31st chapter of Jeremiah, and the 3d verse. "He hath loved us," he says, "with an everlasting love." Now there is the difference between human and Divine love. The one is fleeting, the other is everlasting. There is no end of God's love. I can imagine some of you saying: "If God has loved us with an everlasting love, why does it say that God is angry with the sinner every day?" Why, dear friends, that very word "anger" in the Scriptures is one of the very strongest evidences and expressions of God's love. Suppose I have got two boys, and one of them goes out and lies and swears and steals and gets drunk. If I have no love for him I don't care what he does; but just because I do love him, it makes me angry to see him take that course. And it is because God loves the sinner that he gets angry with him. That very passage shows how strong God's love is. Let me tell you, dear friends, God loves you in all your backslidings and wanderings. You may despise his love, and trample it under your feet, and go down to ruin; but it won't be because God don't love you. I once heard of a father who had a prodigal boy, and the boy had sent his mother down to the grave with a broken heart; and one evening the boy started out as usual to spend the night in drinking and gambling. His old father as he was leaving said: "My son, I want to ask a favor of you to-night. You have not spent an evening with me since your mother died; and now I want you to spend this night at home. I have been very lonely since your mother died. Now won't you gratify your old father by staying at home with him?" "No," said the young man; "it is lonely here, and there is nothing to interest me, and I am going out." And the old man prayed and wept, and at last he said: "My boy, you are just killing me, as you have killed your mother. These hairs are growing whiter, and you are sending me, too, to the grave" Still the boy would not stay, and the old man said: "If you are determined to go to ruin, you must go over this old body tonight. I cannot resist you. You are stronger than I, but if you go out you must go over this body." And he laid himself down before the door, and that son walked over the form of his father, trampled the love of his father under foot, and went out.

And that is the way with sinners. You have got to trample the blood of God's Son under your feet if you go down to death,—to make light of the blood of the innocent, to make light of the wonderful love of God, to despise it. But whether you do or not, he loves you still. I can imagine some of you saying, Why does he not show his love to us? Why, how can it be any further shown than it is? You say so because you won't read his Word and find out how much he loves you. If you will take a concordance and run through the Scriptures with the one word *love*, you will find out how much he loves you; you will find out that it is all one great assurance of his love. He is continually trying to teach you this one lesson, and to win you to himself by a cross of love. All the burdens he has placed upon the sons of men have been out of pure love, to bring them to himself. Those who do not believe that God is love are under the power of the Evil One. He has blinded you, and you have been deceived with his lies. God's dealing has been all with love, *love*, LOVE,—from the fall of Adam to the present hour. Adam's calamity brought down God's love. No sooner did the news reach heaven than God came down after Adam with his love. That voice that rang through Eden was the voice of love, hunting after the fallen one—"Adam, where art thou?" For all these thousand years that voice of love has been sounding down the ages. Out of his love he made a way of escape for Adam. God saved him out of his pity and love.

In the 63d chapter of Isaiah, and the 9th verse, we read: "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them. In his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old." In all their afflictions he was afflicted. You cannot afflict any of God's creatures without afflicting him. He takes the place of a living father. When a man has a sick child burning with fever, how gladly the father or the mother would take that fever and put it into their own bosoms. The mother would take from a child its loathsome disease, right out of its body, and put it into her own—such is a mother's love. How she pities the child, and how gladly she would suffer in the place of the child! That illustration has been often used here—"As a mother pitieth her children." You cannot afflict one of God's creatures, but God feels it. The Son of his bosom came to redeem us from the curse of the world. I do not see how any man with an open Bible before him can get up and say to me that he does not see how God is love. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend." Christ laid down his life on the cross, and cried in his agony, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." That was wonderful love. You and I would have called fire down from heaven to consume them. We would have sent them all down into the hot pavement of hell. But the Son of God lifted up his cry, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

I hear some one say, "I do not see, I do not understand how it is that he loves us." What more proof do you want that God loves you? You say, "I am not worthy to be loved." That is true. I will admit that. And he does not love you because you deserve it. It will help us to get at the Divine love to look a little into our own families, and at our human love. Take a mother with nine children, and they are all good children save one. One is a prodigal, and he has wandered off, and he is everything that is bad. That mother will probably love that prodigal boy as much or more than all the rest put together. It will be with a love mingled with pity. A friend of mine was visiting at a house, some time ago, where quite a company were assembled and were talking pleasantly together. He noticed that the mother seemed agitated, and was all the while going out and coming in. He went to her side and asked her what troubled her; and she took him out into another room and introduced him to her boy. There he was, a poor wretched boy, all mangled and bruised with the fall of sin. She said: "I have much more trouble with him than with all the rest. He has wandered far, but he is my boy yet." She loved him still. So God loves you still.

That love, it ought to break your hearts to hear of; and it ought to bring you right to him. You may say you do not deserve it, and that is true; but because you do not deserve it, God offers it to you. You may say, "If I could get rid of my sins God would love me." In Revelation, 1st chapter, 5th verse, it says: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." It does not say he washed us from our sins, and then loved us. He loved us first, and then washed us clean. Some people say, You must turn away from sin, and then Christ will love you. But how can you get rid of it until you come to him? He takes us into his own bosom, and then he cleanses us from sin. He has shed his blood for you; he wants you; and he will redeem you today, if you will. An Englishman told me a story once that may serve to illustrate this truth, that God loves men in their sin. He does not love sin, but he loves men even in their sin. He seeks to save them from sin. There was a boy, a great many years ago, stolen in London—the same as Charley Ross was stolen here. Long months and years passed away, and the mother had prayed and prayed, as that mother of Charley Ross has prayed, I suppose; and all her efforts had failed, and they had given up all hope. But the mother did not quite give up her hope. One day a boy was sent up into the neighboring house to sweep the chimney, and by some mistake he got down again through the wrong chimney. When he came down, he came in by the sitting-room chimney. His memory began at once to travel back through the years that had passed. He thought that things looked strange and familiar. The scenes of the early days of youth were dawning upon him; and as he stood there surveying the place, his mother came into the room. He stood there, covered with rags and soot. Did she wait till she had sent him to be washed

before she rushed and took him in her arms? No, indeed; it was her own boy. She took him to her arms, all black and smoke, and hugged him to her bosom, and shed tears of joy upon his head. You have wandered very far from him, and there may not be a sound spot on you; but if you will just come to God, he will forgive and receive you. There is a verse in Isaiah 38th, the 17th verse, that I think a good deal of. It reads: "Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption; for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." Mark you, the love comes first. He did not say that he had taken away sins and cast them behind him. He loved us first, and then he took our sins away. I like that little word, m-y, "my," there. The reason we do not get any benefit from scripture is, because we are always talking about generalizations. We say: God loves nations, God loves churches, and loves certain classes of people. But here it reads: "Out of love to my soul, he has taken all my sins and cast them behind his back." If they are behind his back, they are gone from me forever. If they are cast behind his back, how can Satan ever get at them again? I will defy any fiend from hell to find them. Satan can torment me with them no more.

There are three thoughts I have tried to bring out tonight; that *God is love*; that his love is *unchangeable*; that his love is *everlasting*. The fourth thought is this, that his love is *unfailing*. Your love is not. His is. When people come to me and talk about their love for God, it chills me through and through; the thermometer goes down fifty degrees; but when they talk about God's love for them, I know what they would say. So, do not think for a moment that God does not love you a good deal more than you love him. There is not a sinner here, there is not an unsaved man here tonight, but he wants to save,—just as a father loves his child, only a thousand times more. Is there a poor wanderer here that has wandered far from Christ? He sends me to invite you to come to him again. I don't care how sinful you are; let this text sink deep into your soul today, "God is love."